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Table of exchange rates for various countries including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, etc.

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 48,468

End of the peer show

New Labour Establishment: Day 2

Education

Cash crisis in further education

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Portrait

The smut of Gary Bushell

G2 page 7

Anger over schools failure

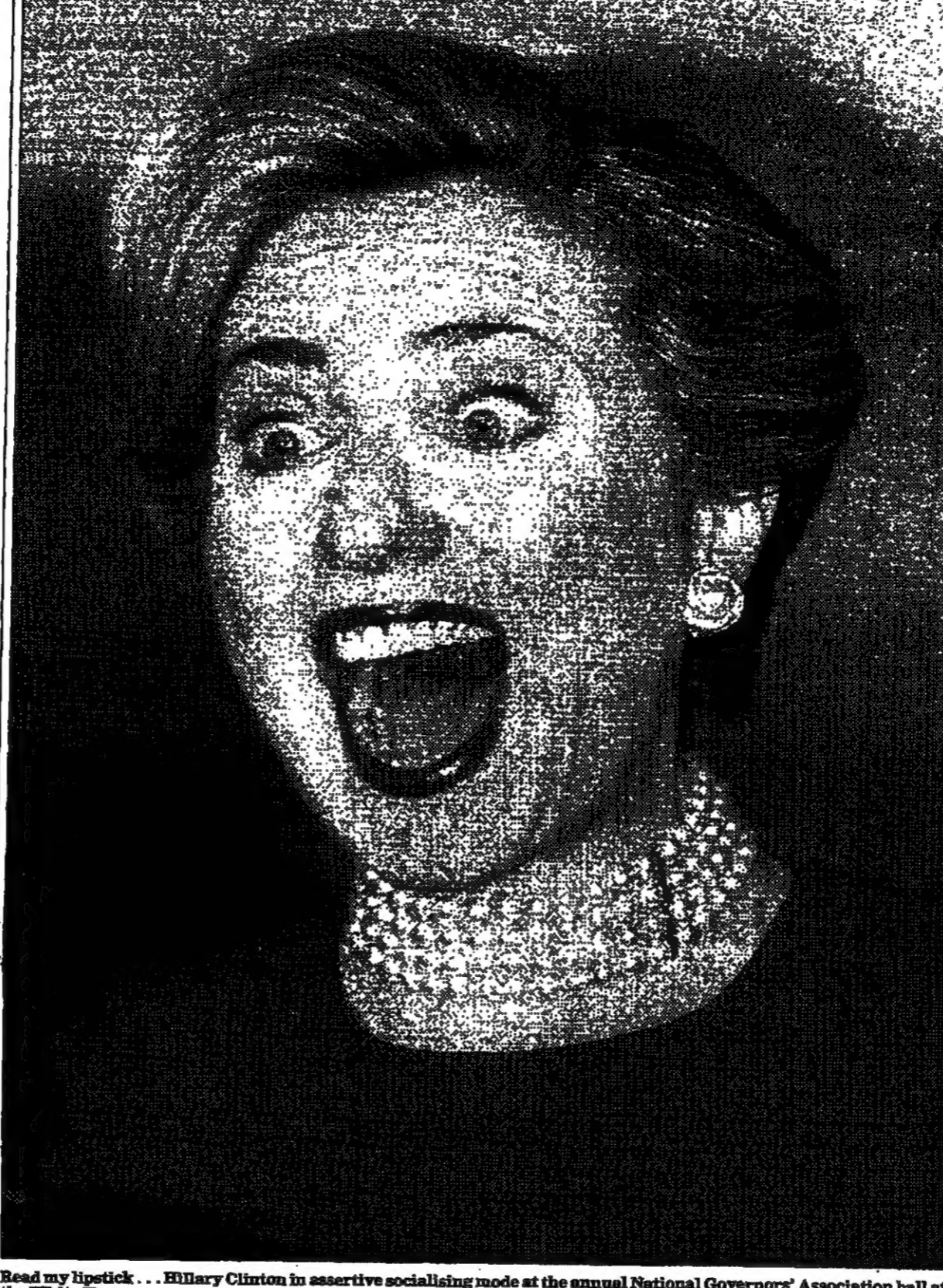
Shephard 'panic' over tests at 11

John Carvel Education Editor

GILLIAN Shephard was last night accused of panicking in the face of fresh evidence from the Office for Standards in Education...

School report

- 1995 Ofsted report reveals: One in three lessons for 9 to 11 year olds unsatisfactory. One in five lessons for 11 to 14 year olds unsatisfactory. Two out of five lessons are good or very good.



Read my lipstick... Hillary Clinton in assertive socialising mode at the annual National Governors' Association ball at the White House

Soldier's hand of friendship eases Bosnian child's painful burden

Julian Berger in Sarajevo reports on a British sergeant's personal mercy mission

WHEN Sergeant-Major Vic Ferguson stroled into the hospital ward, Hurmija Mujic was sitting up in bed looking straight ahead, her face deadened with a numbing combination of grief, loss and boredom.

Srebrenica - but she has good reason to envy the dead. Since a small piece of shrapnel from a Serb shell plunged into her spine in October 1994, she has been paralysed from the waist down.

Cold weather set to last as snow blankets most of Britain

Alex Bellis The London Weather Centre said the bitterly cold weather was moving slowly eastwards and would cover the country by this morning.

closed. Most motorways in Strathclyde were down to one lane. Thousands of school children in Scotland, Wales and the Lake District were sent home because their schools were shut, and hundreds of workers at the Sellafield nuclear complex in Cumbria had to spend last night at work because they were snowed in.

Child bride in Turkey 'six weeks pregnant'

Sarah Boscley, and Chris Nuttall in Ankara

SARAH COOK, the 13-year-old Essex schoolgirl who went through an Islamic marriage ceremony in Turkey, was reported by Turkish television last night to be six weeks pregnant.

WALK THE PROPOSED NEWBURY BYPASS

...and see for yourself the destruction that will be wreaked upon some of Britain's most splendid woodlands, heath and water meadow if this wretched desecration of our countryside is allowed to proceed.



Inside

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Table of contents for the newspaper, listing sections like News, Letters, Comment, etc.



CUT TRAFFIC NOT TREES

Sketch

In the dark, and possibly mad



Simon Hoggart

TO WORK for the first time on a spanking new privatised train. Actually it looked remarkably like an old British Rail train, in the same colours, with the same staff and the same surly youths with their boots up on the seats. It was even 12 minutes late. These days nostalgia is just another source of instant gratification.

fiddles on the privatised TLS line. Labour MPs seemed outraged, although I don't see why they should be surprised. A certain gamy whiff of sleaze is helpful for getting preferment from this government. Perhaps it was in their bid, couched in modern corporate jargon: "We propose to construct an aggressive ongoing reciprocal program of creative unilateral revenue enhancement."

First night

Cruelly, madly, deeply disturbing

Robin Thorne

ONE WAY to adapt a novel for the stage, as Ken Campbell once said, is to get your secretary to type out all the bits in quotation marks. The other way is to deconstruct the ideas in the book and reinterpret them.

ular sandpit suggesting the book's rolling dunes, and a vertical ladder suggesting all sorts of weird theologies. Richard Clewes, as the father, is shaven-headed and sinisterly robed like a medieval cleric. Jane Arfield splits Frank's personality with Matthew Dunster, who also plays Eric, in black casuals.

Survey shows two in three MPs support BBC battle over sport

Patrick Wintour

TWO out of three MPs back regulations to prevent Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB from gaining exclusive access to flagstaff sporting events, a survey revealed yesterday.

favours allowing sporting bodies to determine the market rate for their events, faces defeat over the issue. The poll shows 69 per cent of MPs support regulation of major sports events with 23 per cent opposed. Conservative MPs back regulation by 48 per cent to 37 per cent.

Publishers fight curb on 'explicit sex' in teenagers' magazines

Sally Weale

PUBLISHERS in the lucrative girls' magazine market are resisting attempts to clamp down on explicit sex in publications read by young teenagers. A Bill is to be introduced in the House of Commons today in response to claims of growing concern among parents that magazines read by children as young as 10 and 11 contain too much sex.



Between the covers... A selection of teenage magazines promoting the sexual content that has offended MPs

The writer and broadcaster Clare Rayner, who prompted questions in the House of Commons when, as an agony aunt in the 1960s, she answered a reader who inquired: "What is working?"

Maura Townsend, aged 42, of Wokingham, Berkshire, whose 14-year-old daughter Shelly is a keen reader. I think these magazines are far too sexually explicit. But I would rather she reads them. At least she discusses things with me.

Shelly Townsend, aged 14. I used to read Just Seventeen all the time. I've been reading it since I was 11. When I look back, I think for 11-year-olds there's a bit too much about sex and stuff. I'm more into music magazines now, though sometimes I get things like Mix and Sugar.

Kate Freeman, 12, of Woking, Surrey. I read Sugar, It's Bliss and Smash Hits. I don't think they should be banned or anything. I think they're really good. There's advice and stuff which is interesting, and it's not all about sex.

Soldier eases girl's pain

John Ezzard

organised a "sponsored silence" in her school. "We're not under the illusion that she's ever going to walk again," said Paddy O'Leary. A British Army photographer helping the cause. "We just want her to have a better quality of life."

Brave words

Extract from a letter from Hurmija to Sgt-Major Ferguson's 11-year-old daughter, Charlotte.

"We were sitting and playing under an apple tree. Suddenly one shell landed on the tree. At first, I felt like I was being hit. I was so scared but I just couldn't stand but I just couldn't. The days at the hospital are difficult. My mother and sisters come every day. And your father too. His visits are very important. He's so nice and generous and I love him very much. You are very lucky to have Vic as a father."

'Buddha's birthplace' unearthed in Nepal

John Ezzard

623 BC that "a white elephant, beautiful as silver" entered her womb. While travelling she passed Lumbini. She went into labour, bathed in a sacred pond and gave birth. According to this account, Emperor Ashoka placed a stone on bricks at the birthplace, plus a pillar which still stands. Babu Krishna Rijal, an archaeologist with Lumbini Development Trust, said a detailed report would eventually be made public.

A new Motorola phone with change from one pound.

Advertisement for Motorola Duo Limited Offer. Features a Motorola Duo phone and text: "MOTOROLA DUO LIMITED OFFER 99p INC. VAT PLUS FREE IN-CAR ADAPTOR FREE LEATHER CASE TOGETHER WORTH OVER £55". Includes details about the offer and contact information.

Scott hits back at critics

Richard Norton-Taylor

SIR Richard Scott has hit back at Whitehall-inspired attempts to undermine his arms-to-Iraq inquiry, describing criticism in advance of the publication of his long-awaited report as "worthless".

Survey shows two in three MPs support BBC battle over sport

Patrick Wintour

TWO out of three MPs back regulations to prevent Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB from gaining exclusive access to flagstaff sporting events, a survey revealed yesterday.

The Government, which

China fuels war of nerves

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

IN ITS fiercest display yet in an escalating battle of nerves with Taiwan, China has reportedly massed up to 400,000 troops in a coastal area newly designated a "war zone" prior to a massive, month-long military exercise. As fear of the People's Liberation Army again jolted Taiwan's stock exchange, its president, Lee Teng-hui, yesterday said Beijing's war games showed the Communist Party is "scared to death" of the island's burgeoning democracy.

Military sources confirmed troop movements in Fujian province facing Taiwan in preparation for exercises. An unconfirmed report in Hong Kong's Sing Tao Daily said China would deploy 300 warplanes, 20 elite infantry units, submarines and missile-bearing boats.

It quoted an unnamed Chinese official saying any interference by Taiwanese ships or planes would make a clash "difficult to avoid".

China's manoeuvres, expected to start this week, provide a menacing counterpoint to campaigning in Taiwan for elections at the end of March.

"March 23, 1996, is an important day in Chinese history because it is the first time the country holds democratic presidential elections," President Lee said yesterday in Taipei. "The Chinese communists are scared to death of this historic event."

Beijing sees the poll as a ploy to perpetuate Taiwan's status as a separate political entity and has denounced President Lee as bent on pushing it towards independence.

Beijing hopes military threats will hurt Mr Lee's chances of victory, or force him to abandon efforts to increase Taiwan's profile.

But a new study of the PLA by the Stockholm International Peace Institute doubts whether China has the capability to launch an effective assault. However, political uncertainty has sparked fears that the imperatives of internal power struggles could override military logic.

The tension is causing deep unease in the United States. The Washington Post reported yesterday that US officials had decided to formally warn China that "heightened tension could lead to miscalculation and accident".



Yeovil, scene of firebombings and other attacks

'Utterly disgraceful' report of alleged claims by former massage parlour owner follows Liberal Democrat leader's stand against racial attacks in Somerset seat



Paddy Ashdown in Yeovil yesterday... 'I will take the actions necessary to make sure those who commit crimes are brought to book' PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM CLIFF

Ashdown sues paper over 'sex smear' story

Geoffrey Gibbs

THE Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown yesterday launched a libel action against a Bristol-based daily newspaper for publishing what he called "an utterly disgraceful" article referring to a smear campaign about his personal life.

Under the banner headline "Sex Smear on Paddy", the Western Daily Free repeated allegations said to have been made against the MP by Peter Stoodley, former owner of a Yeovil massage parlour closed down by the Liberal Democrat controlled district council two years ago.

The message parlour — a brothel in all but name — was the cause of acute embarrassment for Yeovil's Lib Dems in November 1994 when it emerged that Nikki Vickers, the daughter of a former Liberal Democrat mayor who had sat on the planning committee that forced the establish-

ment's closure, had worked there as a prostitute.

Mr Stoodley, whose nephew was one of three men arrested and released on police bail in connection with last week's firebomb attack on Mr Ashdown's car, is understood to have tried to pass the story to a number of national newspapers before its publication in Bristol yesterday.

The 53-year-old grandfather, jailed for six months for living on immoral earnings of women at the City Girl establishment, was not available for comment at the flat he owns close to the Liberal Democrat constituency offices in the town centre.

Mr Ashdown, who has represented Yeovil for 13 years, has been the target of threatening phone calls since taking a high profile stand against racist attacks in the Somerset town. He said he had been aware of the allegations for some time.

Liberal democrats have been bracing themselves for the possibility that the

smears will be raised in court later this week, when Mr Ashdown is expected to be a witness in committal proceedings involving a man charged with affray and possession of an offensive weapon.

The 51-year-old man is alleged to have threatened Mr Ashdown with a knife during a street incident last November when the former marine commando was on a late night fact-finding tour of the town to see for himself the problems faced by Yeovil's tiny ethnic population.

Mr Ashdown refused to comment on the smears yesterday but made it clear that he would not let them deter him from stamping out "the scourge of terrorism and intimidation" in the town, if required to do so he would be in court as a witness for the pending hearing.

"I am not prepared to be dissuaded from taking action," he said at the party's constituency offices yesterday. "That is what the town has suffered from for so long.

And I will follow through, in the face of whatever deterrent or whatever threat, the actions that I think are necessary in order to make sure that those who commit crimes in this town are brought to book."

A spokesman for Mr Ashdown's lawyers, who served the writ on Bristol United Press, publishers of the Western Daily Free, said: "They have plunged like some elephant into a trap of their own making. I can't believe it."

Western Daily Free editor Ian Beales was said by the paper's newswriter to be unavailable for comment.

The sex smear allegations against Mr Ashdown and the recent arson attack that destroyed the MP's car close to his home in the village of Norton-Sub-Hamdon are the culmination of a complex series of events that have brought unwelcome notoriety to Somerset's third largest town.

The MP has fallen foul of some elements in the town after taking a leading role in

the Partnership Against Racial Harassment in Somerset, a cross-party coalition established last autumn in the wake of the fire bombing of a Kabah house run by an ethnic Turkish family.

Other restaurants in the same part of town have also suffered attacks and staff complain of frequent incidents of verbal and physical abuse. The population of Bangladeshi, Turkish, Thai and Iranian restaurant owners and staff make up 0.5 per cent of the town's 38,000 population. They have found themselves isolated and vulnerable.

Contrary to tabloid myth, however, Yeovil is no Wild West town. Despite the high profile coverage given to the firebomb attack on Mr Ashdown's car and to the earlier street incident in which the MP was allegedly threatened with a knife, law and order has not experienced a general breakdown. Newspaper talk of gangs of "ciderheads" and "boomtown rats" on the raz-

page provokes bemusement among local people.

Rumours persist that some of the trouble may be linked to protection rackets. But residents say the police have been frustrated in trying to get convictions because potential witnesses often fear retaliation.

Questions about who is ultimately behind the firebombs and other attacks that have blackened the town's reputation elicit the same names.

"There is a hard core gang of two or three families — who are behind these sort of attacks," said one observer of the town's troubles who asked not to be named. "They have henchmen who carry them out for them and anybody who stands up against them is threatened and targeted. It's not just racism."

Councillors and social workers in the town are among those understood to have faced threats after crossing the families concerned.

Police are currently investi-

gating a number of fire-related incidents in the town, including a firebomb attack on the offices of the Western Gazette newspaper last October which caused £100,000 damage. No one has been arrested, but staff are convinced the attack was triggered by the leading role the Gazette has played in highlighting racist attacks in the town.

After speaking out at the time of the alleged knife attack on their local MP members of the ethnic population are now reluctant to talk for fear of provoking further trouble.

Silence has not brought respite however. Only a week after Mr Ashdown's late night tour a mob gathered in "takeaway alley" shouting abuse and threatening staff in a tandoori restaurant.

Staff at the restaurant said people were too scared to eat there because of the troubles. "Look around the restaurant, it's empty. We've been ruined by what's happened," one worker said.

Taste of the future put to the test

Gary Younger seeks expert opinion on genetically altered tomato puree

WITH an open mind and a refined palate Mariano Casotti brought the spoonful of genetically modified Californian tomato puree to his mouth and tasted the future.

"Not much difference," he said of the puree, on sale for the first time in Sainsbury and Safeway stores yesterday. He smacked his lips, washed his spoon and went back to his traditionally grown Italian puree for further comparison.

What Mr Casotti does not know about pasta and sauces is probably not worth knowing. For the past 35 years the assistant executive chef to Spaghetti House has been up and making the company's pasta by the tubful while the rest of the country has scarcely thought of breakfast.

But taste, he says, isn't everything. "The colour is very rich and dark which could deaden the colour of meat in a bolognese sauce. And the texture is slightly rougher... more starchy," he said, absent-mindedly patting both dishes of red goo smooth with the bottom of his spoon.

He conferred in Italian with Riccardo Lavarini to ensure the two connoisseurs spoke with one, satiated, tongue. "Without comparing actual dishes it is a little difficult to say but usually we use puree just for colouring the sauces," said Mr Lavarini, the director of Spaghetti House.

"I must say I'm a little uncomfortable with the name. People like to think that they are getting freshly prepared



Mariano Casotti with the new puree PHOTOGRAPH BY GARRY WEAVER

food. This sounds a little too scientific."

It took 21 years of research to produce the 29p can of puree in question. The big breakthrough came in 1988 when they isolated the enzyme which accelerates the rotting process in tomatoes, allowing growers to produce longer-lasting, firmer-textured fruit.

The benefits are that firmer tomatoes will not go squashy when they are handled; more arrive at shops intact and once there they do not deteriorate as quickly.

The Sainsbury's version comes with a special leaflet reassuring customers that all ethical considerations have been taken into account. It has even earned the approval of their advisory committee on genetic modification. "We treat the ethical issues relating to genetically modified

products on a case by case basis. With tomatoes there did not seem to be a problem," said a Sainsbury's spokesman last night, insisting that demand will determine how long it remains on the shelves. For the sceptics there is a freephone number for further explanation.

For those who just want something cheap and tasty to put on their pizza bases most of the information is on the tin.

"There is a European proposal that novel foods — if they are substantially different from the originals — will have to be labelled. And they will have to be labelled if there is an ethical or religious consideration," said Dr Gavin Cree of the BioIndustry Association yesterday.

But for Mr Casotti the proof of the puree, genetically modified or not, will always be in the eating.

Gene genius

BEYOND the genetically modified tomato lie huge possibilities, writes Tim Radford. Some are ready for testing, some are twinkles in the geneticists' eyes. They include:

- The hairy killer potato with a high density of glandular trichomes transferred from a wild potato. Any Colorado beetle that eats the leaves will suffer serious constipation, crushing its ovaries. Any smaller creature will get stuck to the hairs.
- Tracey the sheep is a potential lifesaver in a field near Edinburgh. In each litre of her milk are 35 grams of human alpha-1 antitrypsin, a protein vital in the treatment of emphysema or cystic fibrosis.
- Michigan State University scientists have taken a gene from a bacterium that makes tiny amounts of biodegradable thermoplastic and slipped it into sugar beet hoping to turn 10 per cent of the harvest into industrial-grade polymer.
- Astrid the pig at Cambridge has a gene for producing human complement, which recognises foreign tissue and rejects it. This opens the way to supplying heart transplants for humans from pigs.
- Genes that make a jellyfish gleam have been transferred to a tobacco plant, which glows when it is attacked by fungus — allowing farmers to isolate affected plants for treatment.

...in strictly diagnostic terms, it is a gastrointestinal virus which by the liberates and destroys the cells of the gut. It has been identified that this is the most common cause of diarrhoea in children.

The usually leads to the presence of one of the few clinical forms of hepatitis, namely the incubated, disseminated primary hepatitis, following which the formation of the virus is suppressed.

Various laboratory, culture and records of the contagious disease, streptococci, of course, is available.

Several researches and multiple instances in the literature have shown that the virus is usually found in Singapore such as a tropical country, governmental trust territory and colonial dependencies. In the vast majority of cases, however, the disease is caused by the use of unhygienic preparation of the virus as liquid and pasteurized milk prepared for many for long period.

Intensive research has indicated that the duration of respiratory infection is usually less than a period in excess of ninety six hours.

Those who are particularly susceptible to gastrointestinal zoonoses include the soldiers and the diabetic, as well as those who are in the process of receiving glucocorticoids and deproteinising therapy.

And I don't think it needs a person of my background to tell you that in addition to the fact that you have been previously diagnosed as suffering from gastroenteritis, a haematological malignancy, those who have undergone chemotherapy are also at a noticeably greater risk of the type of infection of the gastrointestinal tract...

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The Lords, even divested of hereditary voters, would remain an abuse of democracy, the country's biggest quango. And no ordinary quango, but a dolled-up doppelgänger for the Commons, stuffed with placelords and placeladies whose political allegiances neatly matched those of their creators.

G2 cover story

Scott hits back at critics

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Lilley put in dock over refugees

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

THE High Court yesterday cleared the way for a legal challenge to the Government's decision to withdraw welfare benefits from up to 30,000 asylum seekers a year.

A full judicial review hearing to be held on Wednesday could lead to a high court injunction against Peter Lilley, the Social Security Secretary.

The case will be heard alongside challenges brought by both Westminster, and Hammersmith and Fulham councils, also claiming Mr Lilley has acted illegally. The benefit cuts came into effect from midnight yesterday.

The action brought yesterday by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants claims the £200 million a year benefit cuts were *ultra vires* and improper because they would effectively curtail asylum seekers' ability to pursue claims to be refugees.

Mr Justice Brooke agreed the council had "an arguable case" that asylum seekers were entitled to be treated as genuine refugees until their claims were determined, and were therefore entitled to claim benefits unless and until their claims were proved bogus.

Mr Lilley's counsel in court, Steven Kovats, fiercely resisted the suggestion that the benefit cuts were in any way illegal — but he did concede there would be "individual cases of hardship".

He also said it was a matter of political judgment to bal-

ance public expenditure savings and the large number of unsuccessful appeals against those individual cases.

The Government also denied that the United Nations conventions on Refugees and the Rights of the Child were part of English law.

But Nicholas Blake, QC, for the council, said there were 287 cases last year of people who were recognised as refugees only when their appeals were heard. They would be among those no longer eligible to claim housing benefit, income support or other welfare benefits.

He said the measures could lead to destitute immigrant families being driven on to the streets — or "improperly forced" to return to countries where they feared persecution. The regulations were an unlawful means to dissuade asylum seekers from pursuing appeals.

Last night council spokesman Claude Moraes said he was delighted at the decision. He said the action aimed to ensure that asylum seekers had the health and sustenance to make their claims and pursue their appeals.

Both Labour and Liberal Democrats demanded that the Government think again and withdraw the regulations.

Chris Smith, Labour's social services spokesman, who said the judge had clearly shared his misgivings about the impact of the changes, claimed the decision was a major setback for Mr Lilley.

The Liberal Democrats said they hoped the full judicial review succeeded.



Firefighters gather outside the Department of the Environment offices in London yesterday to protest about threatened cuts in the fire service

PHOTOGRAPH GARRY WEASER

FIREFIGHTERS protesting about job cuts in London demonstrated outside the Department of the Environment yesterday, writes Alex Bellis. They are angry that hundreds

of jobs will be lost and four stations face closure because of a funding controversy.

London's fire authority claims its budget has been cut by millions of pounds. It says

it has to make savings by losing jobs, closing stations and withdrawing a number of appliances.

Meanwhile in Bristol, colleagues of 21-year-old Fleur

Lombard, the first British woman firefighter to die on service, paid her a silent tribute. Members of her blue watch from Speedwell fire station, north Bristol, laid flo-

ral tributes at the supermarket where she died on Sunday. They ringed the main entrance of the Co-op store in Staple Hill, where Ms Lombard was one of the first

to enter with firefighter Rob Seaman. Mr Seaman, who escaped with slight injuries, was recovering yesterday at home.

Hit squad shot soccer player during match

Ernest Clouston

MEMBERS of a hit squad who attempted to assassinate the wrong man during a football match were yesterday sent to jail for a total of 65 years.

The sentences, believed to be the longest ever imposed in Scotland for a crime other than murder, followed an attempt to silence a witness.

Glasgow High Court heard that only luck and a faulty pistol had prevented wholesale slaughter during the match between Hillhouse Amateurs and Barrhead Moor at Uplavmoor, near Glasgow, on October 14 last year.

Robert Taylor, aged 28, Andrew Elliott, aged 31, both of Glasgow, and 37-year-old Esedale Campbell, from Hamilton, were told by Lord Johnston that there were no grounds for exercising mercy in a case in which a Hillhouse fullback, waiting for a corner, received two bullets instead.

The court was told that the gunman's target should have been the Hillhouse treasurer, John Martin. A former friend of Campbell, he had been due to be a witness at a trial in which Campbell's son and an-



Charles Ballantyne, the defender shot in error

other youth were charged with stabbing his nephew.

The would-be killers, however, mistook left back Charles Ballantyne for Mr Martin. As the 32-year-old British Telecom worker from Motherwell prepared for the corner with Hillhouse comfortably ahead 4-0, he spotted Taylor pointing a gun at his head and then heard his six-

year-old son shout: "My daddy's been shot."

The first bullet lodged just above Mr Ballantyne's left ear. As he tried to crawl away Taylor fired again, but this time the bullet glanced off his back. The crowd pursued Taylor who shot and missed again.

Before Elliott held back the shocked spectators with what he claimed was a shotgun wrapped in a roll of paper, Taylor tried three times to fire his pistol, but the firing pin was off-line.

Campbell, who had been waiting nearby, then drove the two men off in his car. They were cornered by police after a sump chase. Taylor, who pleaded guilty half way through the trial, was sentenced to 25 years, five of which were for firing on the crowd. His companions were each sentenced to 20 years.

Afterwards, a Strathclyde policeman said the men had broken every rule in the mafia hitman's manual: "Campbell used his own car, they tried to carry out an execution not only in front of witnesses but in the middle of a football field, and then they shot the wrong man."

Old Etonian in gem fraud freed after paying £227,000

Barbie Dutter

DARIUS Guppy, the Old Etonian convicted of a £1.8 million insurance swindle, was released from prison yesterday after paying £227,000 in compensation to Lloyd's of London.

Guppy, aged 30, had served three years of a five year sentence for staging a bogus gems robbery in New York in 1990, then fraudulently claiming insurance damages. He was sent back to prison in December after failing to obey an order to compensate the insurers.

Guppy, who was best man at the wedding of the Princess of Wales's brother, Earl Spencer, had been freed pending an appeal against a second, three-year prison term, but his bail order was revoked by a High Court judge and he spent Christmas in Ford open prison in Sussex.

Guppy set up the fraud with Benedict Marsh, his partner in a jewellery firm. They paid an associate £10,000 to tie them up and supposedly rob them at gunpoint. Their false invoices for £1.8 million worth of stones were paid by underwriting syndicates. Both were jailed for five years in March 1993.

In April 1994, Guppy lost an appeal against the length of his jail term, but his £535,000 fine was replaced with a £227,000 compensation order.

Smear re-tests 'not alarming'

Chris Millill
Medical Correspondent

THOUSANDS of women are to have their cervical smears re-examined after missed abnormalities were found, a health authority said yesterday.

Health chiefs said the checks were working rather than evidence of blunders. Women in Kent and Canterbury who had smears between 1990 and 1995 are to have their slides reviewed by an independent laboratory.

The hospital admitted that possibly 700 women who had been told they were in the clear might have had some suspicious signs on their slides, although that did not mean they had cancer.

No women are being recalled for fresh tests, but they will be informed of the findings within 14 days. The move follows a review by outside laboratories which found some abnormalities on the slides had been missed.

Kent and Canterbury carries out 27,000 smears a year, and as part of quality control procedures sent some 11,000 slides to two labs in Manchester and Birmingham for double-checking. The results suggested there were question marks over 89 of them.

Michael Milligan, clinical director of obstetrics and gynaecology for Kent and Canterbury NHS Trust, said: "It is important to remember that cervical screening is used to

detect something which should be investigated — it does not diagnose cancer."

The NHS Cervical Screening Programme, the national screening body, pointed out that all health authorities and laboratories were now enrolled in quality assurance programmes using external examiners to judge standards, and work was continuing to ensure all screeners reached consistent standards.

National co-ordinator Julietta Patrick said deaths from cervical cancer had fallen from 1,485 in 1993 to 1,396 in 1994 largely due to the programme's effectiveness.

She added: "No screening programme is 100 per cent accurate but the NHS CSP is working to improve the accuracy of interpretation of smears by laboratories and to increase the consistency with which abnormalities are classified as minor or severe."

Cervical screeners explained that smears are examined using microscopes to look at cell changes on slides, but interpreting sometimes very small abnormalities was a matter of judgment rather than a clear-cut science.

Kate Neales, consultant gynaecologist at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, said: "Women should not be unduly alarmed, but should be encouraged that we are taking these steps to improve our services for the future."

The hospital yesterday opened a telephone helpline for worried patients: 01227 766016.

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Labour presses for franchise re-run after allegations of ticket fraud on Southend line

Inquiry risk to rail licence

Rebecca Smithers and Keith Harper
THE GOVERNMENT conceded yesterday that the inquiry into an alleged ticket fraud on the London Tilbury and Southend rail line might force it to withdraw the licence from the present holders, Enterprise Rail, and hold a second round of bidding for the franchise.

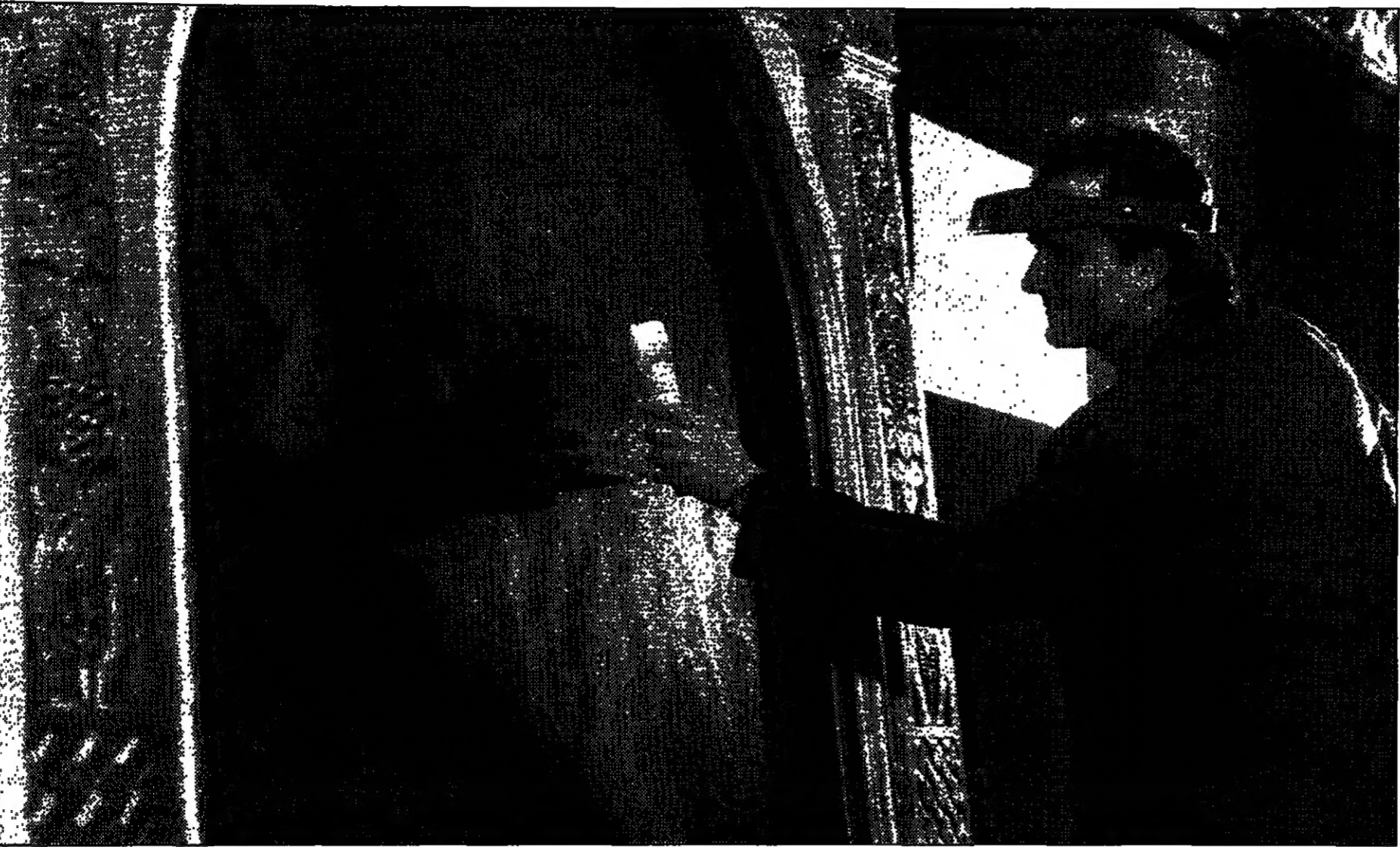
taken by the government-appointed franchising director, Roger Salmon. Labour pressed for a commitment that the franchising would be rerun, and called on the financial backers of Enterprise Rail, a management buy-out team, to clarify whether they plan to withdraw their support for the company.

agency question from Sir Teddy Taylor, whose Southend constituency is on the line in question. The allegations relate to the re-issuing of tickets at a station used both by mainline and Tube trains which has deprived London Underground of up to £45,000 over the last six weeks.

pending on the outcome of the investigations by British Rail and the Government's own regulators, the final decision was down to Mr Salmon. Despite Mr Salmon's assurances yesterday that he expected the privatisation to be back on track within a month, he promised that there was no question of the investigation being rushed.

"The question is whether reputable investors want anything to do with the alleged malpractices which go hand in hand with the fragmentation and privatisation of the railways". Sir George also confirmed that, following the resignation last week of Colin Andrews, commercial director of LTS Rail, another senior staff member had been suspended.

also carried out duties involving passenger safety. A second investigation has been launched into LTS. Its managers are said to have quietly withdrawn the company's penalty fares scheme because they felt that not enough passengers without tickets were being caught to justify costs.



Holman Hunt's masterpiece The Light of the World undergoes expert examination yesterday after being removed from St Paul's Cathedral in London for conservation work. The picture, one of three versions painted by the artist, has been stained by candle smoke and the fingers of the faithful but should be back in place by summer. PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK MARTIN

News in brief

Jail threat for Tory ex-leader

THE former deputy Tory leader of Lambeth Council, south London, faces a jail sentence after pleading guilty yesterday to procuring a mortgage by deception and five counts of dishonestly obtaining housing benefit in 1994 to pay his mortgage. Peter John Evans, 35, who resigned on Sunday, was remanded on bail at Snaresbrook crown court for pre-sentence and psychiatric reports. Judge Andrew Brooks said: "I don't want you to leave the dock thinking you are going to get away with this. I am thinking of passing a custodial sentence."

Blizzard halts murder dig

A BLIZZARD yesterday brought a halt to an attempt to solve the suspected murder of Danny Dyke, aged 31, an osteopath who operated as a drug dealer. South Wales police had started digging near a village of Gwynedd in West Glamorgan but had to abandon the search when the snow became too heavy. Mr Dyke, a former physiotherapist with the Welsh rugby club, Aberavon, and said to have been a supplier of cocaine and cannabis, went missing from his home in Eastbourne, East Sussex in April 1994. He was last seen in Swansea and his car was found in a car park in Brecon, Powys. — Duncan Campbell

Footballer's fatal kick

A WOLVERHAMPTON Wanderers footballer, James Kelly, killed a man by kicking his head like a football in an early morning brawl outside a hotel, Liverpool crown court heard yesterday. Peter Dunphy, 36, collapsed and lay still and died almost instantly from the blow to the base of the skull and upper neck, said prosecuting counsel David Steer, QC. Kelly, of Willenhall, west Midlands, has admitted manslaughter. His brother, John Kelly, 23, of Everton, and Kevin Atkinson, 22, of Tuebrook, both Liverpool, have admitted assault. The case continues today.

Remand decision defended

SOCIAL service staff yesterday defended a decision to house a youth on remand in a flat attached to an old people's home, because of a national shortage of secure accommodation. The 14-year-old boy, remanded into the care of Calderdale council, West Yorkshire, by a juvenile court, was placed in the flat under one-to-one supervision when all other options failed. The council emphasised yesterday that the rooms in Halifax had a separate entrance to the adjacent Claremont House elderly people's home. A spokeswoman said: "We are making every effort to find suitable accommodation to meet his individual needs, but there is a national shortage of this and similar demands are being made by other authorities." — Martin Watnour

Lottery plea to rural districts

RURAL areas which were significantly under-represented in millennium lottery grants were urged yesterday by Jennifer Page, the chief executive of the Millennium Commission, to get in more applications. The second round of applications closes next week, and the third and probably final round in July. By the end of the year the commission expects to have allocated all its £1.2 billion fund for capital grants. "We have racked our brains on why the rural applicants are not coming forward," she told a seminar in London. "There may be some mistaken belief that grants are destined only for grand metropolitan projects." When the commissioners canvassed public opinion they found overwhelming support for environmental and community projects. — Maeve Kennedy

Power station in movie bid

MOVE over Pinewood, stand aside Ealing. The future of Britain's film industry may lie in the great turbine hall of a redundant power station at Trawsfynydd, near Blaenau Ffestiniog, in Wales. A consortium of local councils is promoting the huge concrete hulk as an ideal home for complex movie sets. — Martin Watnour

Row erupts as Booker alters rules

Michael Ellison Arts Correspondent
BRITAIN'S best-known book prize had barely recovered from the recent shock of selecting a relatively uncontroversial winner when it re-established its reputation for conflict yesterday. A good 10 months before the next Booker Prize will be awarded to succeed Pat Barker, literary publishers were angered by a change in the rules. The judges had to plough through a record 141 novels last year and organisers decided something must be done to prevent word-fugues. They agreed to reduce the numbers publishers could enter from three to two, plus one by any previously short-listed writer and another by any past winner. As disputes go, it might seem tame compared with the



'Before winning I always thought the best thing about the prize would be never having to think about the Booker again in your life. I'd still be happy with that, but I don't think my publisher would' — Pat Barker

rows over suggestions that the award might be scrapped (the late Sir Kingsley Amis); claims of persistent exclusion from the shortlist (Martin Amis); the selection of James Kelman as winner in 1994; and the observation that modern fiction is an "ordale" (John Bayley, chairman of the judges, also 1994). But Dan Franklin, publishing director of Cape, said: "I'm appalled by the rule change. Reducing the number entered means you will end up with a dull, safe list. In the old days you would discover new writers, not the obvious people. Now you're never going to get any first novels on there, or difficult or dangerous books." Liz Calder, publishing director of Bloomsbury, said: "I think it's pretty feeble to feel the need to cut back. I should feel sorry for the judges. I read hundreds of books every week. If it was left to me, publishers would not have to make the first choice; the judges should call in the books they want to consider."

Crofters offered ownership in Highlands funding deal

Erland Clouston
TWO of the shackles on the Highland economy were loosened yesterday with the announcement of plans that could revolutionise both land ownership patterns and contact with the outside world. About 1,400 crofters are to be offered the chance to take over — in some cases without charge — their government-owned estates. The increased business activity expected to spring from this should be aided by a £46 million telecommunications network which will ultimately bring 95 per cent of the region within mobile phone range. Details of the Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, at the first Inverness sitting of the Scottish Grand Committee. He unveiled a mixture of European Union and private sector funding to the region worth £130 million and more than 1,000 new jobs. Around £4 million of EU funding will go towards the telecommunications network, with the £42 million balance provided by Cellnet and Vodafone. Iain Robertson, chief executive of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, said the investment would be invaluable to northern businessmen, as well as offering "potentially lifesaving benefits" to medical staff, fishermen, hill-walkers and motorists. A further £2.3 million of EU funds will enable Barmac's fabrication yard at Nigg in Easter Ross to compete in the international market for floating oil production systems. Land reformers, who blame indifferent estate owners for the stagnation of many Highland communities, will hope that the plan to divest the Scottish Office of its 6.3 million crofting acres presages the break-up of a system which has blighted the area for more than two centuries. Mr Forsyth said a consultation paper would be mailed to tenants outlining the benefits of transferring ownership to community trusts. "We are prepared, if circumstances justify it, to transfer certain crofts free of charge." The Scottish Crofters' Union broadly welcomed the proposals. "We hope all Scottish Office crofters seriously consider the offer," said crofting adviser Fiona Mandeville.

Man jailed for 18 years for armed robberies — and killing his father

AMAN who killed his violent, bullying father while he was a teenager and buried the body in the cellar was jailed for 18 years yesterday at the Old Bailey. Stephen French, aged 32, was given five years for manslaughter, 12 years for a string of robberies and an additional 12 months for escaping from custody. Passing sentence, the Recorder of London, Sir Lawrence Vauxey, accepted French's "childhood of staggering evil" but said it did not justify the solution. The court was told after the killing, French, then only 14, wanted to tell police but his mother discouraged him and made him promise to remain silent while she was alive. It was not until he was in prison on remand for robberies that he called police to his cell and described how he shot his father, Peter Leslie, in the head as he slept, and eventually buried the remains in a house in Forest Gate, east London, where it remained for 17 years. French denied murdering his 63-year-old father but admitted manslaughter. He also pleaded guilty to several robberies, attempted robberies and escaping from custody in 1992. Orlando Pownall, prosecuting, told the court how French and others tried to dispose of his father's body. He said acid and lime were poured on to it to dissolve it but when this failed it was cut in half and put in two drums in the garden and attempts made to burn it. It was a childhood of "staggering evil" which had affected French throughout his adult life, said Rock Tansey QC, defending. The court heard how Mr Leslie would knock out the children's teeth, crack their ribs and point shotguns at their heads and threaten to shoot them. Once he forced French to eat a meal containing dog food, bleach and sink cleaner. When the boy vomited he was made to eat that too. In his confession to police, French explained: "All my life he had bullied, hit and abused the family. I just snapped, I didn't want the pain and the continual harassment. "He was just one evil person."

EuroBusiness advertisement featuring a man in a suit and sunglasses. Text includes: 'EuroBusiness Blood, sweat and tyres', 'By Europeans for Europeans', 'To receive Europe's premier monthly business magazine free for three months, cut out and return the coupon below'. There is a large scissors icon indicating where to cut.

Subscription coupon form for EuroBusiness Magazine. It includes fields for: First name, Job Title, Company Name, Company Address, Telephone number, Fax, and Date. There are checkboxes for 'Payment enclosed', 'Please invoice my company', and 'Please charge my: Access, Visa, MasterCard, EuroCard'. A table shows subscription charges for 1995 for UK, Continental Europe, USA and Canada, and Rest of World. At the bottom, it says 'PROCC032'.

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e-tests ming



After 18 years of warfare, Afghans can see little difference between rival Muslim factions, and find life as harsh under their present government as they did under its communist predecessor

John Burns reports



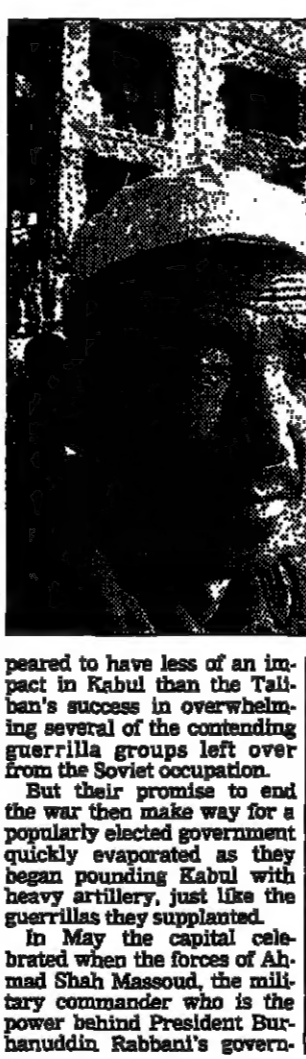
Pedlars... Kabul traders use bicycles to shop for scarce goods beyond the siege lines. Many do not make it back across no man's land to the ruins among which their fellow citizens live

Kabul's misery wears a single face

FIVE young Afghans bitterly cold morning last week for the gamble of a lifetime. On borrowed bicycles, they planned to cross siege lines south of Kabul, load up with sacks of flour, cans of petrol and bundles of firewood, and be back home by noon.

It is 18 years this spring since Marxist conspirators overthrew the Afghan president and set off a civil war, seven years next week since the last of the Soviet troops who invaded in December 1979, ostensibly in support of those Marxist rulers, withdrew, bludgeoned by nine years of fighting American-backed Muslim guerrillas.

that was golden, compared to this," said a doctor at the Karte Seb Hospital, watching orderlies carrying in the body of a 14-year-old boy whose brain had been blown out by a Taliban bombing raid.



ment, struck the Taliban with a lightning offensive and drove them back 30 miles from the capital.

'We fought against the country that Ronald Reagan called the evil empire, and it was as a result of our sacrifices that the evil empire collapsed. But afterward we were forgotten'

Because there is only a vestigial international presence here — no UN military force of the kind that tried to limit the conflict in Bosnia, and only skeleton staffs at the international relief agencies which distribute food, medical supplies and other aid — the distress seems more acute.

ican aid channelled through the UN and other organisations has fallen to between \$40 million and \$60 million a year, the US embassy in Pakistan estimates. American diplomacy has been limited to encouraging a UN mediation effort which has never come close to persuading the contending Muslim groups to stop fighting.

Mexican army moves in to break oilfield blockade

Phil Gannon in Mexico City
TENSION remained high yesterday in the oilfields of south-east Mexico, after a series of operations by the army, navy and police at the weekend to begin removing protesters who had blockaded 51 oil wells.

among the most important in Latin America, and this is the second time in less than a year that the PRD has led a blockade of drilling sites.

of the oil company's contributions to the state government. The governor of Tabasco, Roberto Madrazo, present at the National Human Rights Commission with plans to reduce pollution and provide maintenance for pipelines, one of which blew up in 1994.

News in brief

Asian women form 'fastest growing pool of cheap labour'

LEFT out of Asia's economic success story, women from poorer parts of the region have become the world's fastest growing pool of cheap and often abused migrant labour, according to the International Labour Office, writes Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong.

mostly as maids, nurses and "entertainers", a euphemism for a booming sex industry. Whereas women accounted for only 15 per cent of the Asian migrant workforce in the 1970s, they now equal or outnumber the number of male migrant workers.

and more prosperous areas of Asia, the ILO said yesterday. Well-organised smugglers trade increasingly in women. Among the indignities inflicted on women working abroad are pregnancy tests every six months. Others are forced into prostitution after migrating on promises of legitimate work. Domestic service and entertainment were rarely covered by labour laws or social security, leaving

many female migrants defenceless against abuse, said the ILO report. The abuse of women workers has become a sensitive political issue across Asia, straining relations between countries that send and those that employ them. Poorer countries sporadically vow to halt sending citizens overseas but have become too dependent on their earnings to take real action.

Guatemala's leader attacked as pope arrives

THOUSANDS of Catholics yesterday carpeted the streets of Guatemala City with flower-petal images to greet Pope John Paul II at the start of his week-long tour of Latin America.

The festive atmosphere was marred by what government officials said was an attempt to kill President Alvaro Arzu on Sunday. Mr Arzu and his wife Patricia escaped unhurt when a pickup truck appeared to try to ram them as they rode home from the capital. Security men shot and killed the truck driver.

Earthquakes to blame for Old Faithful's new unpredictability

OLD FAITHFUL isn't any more. The world's most famous geyser, in Yellowstone National Park, is becoming irregular, writes Ian Katz in New York.

Experts blame a series of minor earthquakes in the area which may have interfered with the channels directing pressurised hot water up to the silica cone. They also speculate that Old Faithful may have become partially blocked by thousands of items thrown in by visitors over the years, including underwear, furniture, beer cans, coins and rifle shells.

German police 'xenophobic'

Amnesty International said yesterday it had received many reports in the last 10 months of German police beating up detained foreigners. It demanded an investigation.

Hostages at risk

Experts voiced concern yesterday about the health of 13 hostages — including four Britons — held by rebels in Brian Jaya, Indonesia, as they entered their fifth week in captivity. — Reuters.

Island dispute

Nigerian and Cameroonian troops fought on disputed islands in the Bakassi peninsula at the weekend and several were killed on both sides, a Nigerian officer said. He said the Cameroonians started the fighting but were pushed back from positions they occupied. — Reuters.

Greece snubs US envoy

THE Greek government, facing public indignation at Washington's role in defusing the row with Turkey over a disputed Aegean island, yesterday forced the US assistant secretary of state, Richard Holbrooke, to cancel his forthcoming visit, writes Helena Smith in Athens.

Costas Similtis said: "The programme that Holbrooke proposed does not fit in with the government's schedule. So the visit is not possible." He has been attacked for accepting a US-brokered compromise over the uninhabited island. Yesterday, tensions erupted after a near-collision between a Greek coast guard boat and a Turkish warship.

Korean defection

A South Korean man defected to the communist North yesterday, Pyongyang said. The North's official Korea Central News Agency quoted Jo Wong, aged 38, as saying he was disillusioned with the Seoul government. — AP.

Police car racket

Chinese police have seized 105 fake police cars which had wreaked havoc on roads in Guangdong province, the Beijing-funded China News Agency said yesterday. Police arrested 49 people in raids on seven centres making or selling fake police car licence plates. — Reuters.

Garry says he thinks his lounge is 'Orrible. Orrible! There's a lotter stonework at one end. There's some statuettes of Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy, my heroes.' And he falls about laughing again.

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US and Europe haggle over reconstruction bill Dispute threatens funds for Bosnia

Larry Elliott in Davos

A DISPUTE between the United States and Europe over funding for the \$5.1 billion (£3.3 billion) package to rebuild the Bosnian economy threatens to delay the massive reconstruction effort, it emerged last night.

With the World Bank stressing that work on rebuilding infrastructure, schools and hospitals needed to get under way immediately, US and European Union officials admitted they were still haggling over the shares of the bill.

Richard Holbrooke, US assistant secretary of state for European and Canadian affairs, said in Davos yesterday: "It is certainly true that in an era of budgetary constraint all of us are a bit troubled about the amount of aid all of us are going to have to contribute."

Just over \$500 million has been found to "jump-start" the Bosnian economy, but the World Bank says this will only be enough for the first three months of 1996.

It is putting pressure on donor governments — who are expected to find 90 per cent of the \$5.1 billion — to settle their differences before a special conference in April, which will discuss a full blueprint for the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Officials are working on a fast-track programme for Bosnia-Herzegovina to join the World Bank in the spring, stressing that implementing the \$5.1 billion package would be far cheaper than continued humanitarian aid.

Christina Wallich, acting director of the World Bank's central European division, said last night: "The civilian

Britain angry at Bildt delay

BRITAIN is angry that the United States has made no contribution to the operation of Carl Bildt, overseeing civilian peace implementation in Bosnia, *writes Ian Black.*

Foreign Office officials said yesterday that the European Union had paid half of the 20 million euros slated for his budget but had not received the 20-25 per cent pledged by the US at last December's London conference.

The complaint follows US criticism of Mr Bildt's progress and a sense that Washington is too focused on the military side of the settlement.

Effort needs to be as fast as the military effort. There is no time to lose."

The Bank believes the donor package is vital to convince the people of Bosnia that the peace process is working and to encourage the next stage of the reconstruction process — an influx of private-sector money.

The need for the private sector to move into Bosnia has been one of the main themes of the World Economic Forum in Davos, and World Bank president Jim Wolfensohn has been lobbying hard among the businessmen gathered for the week of discussions.

Ms Wallich said she remained confident that the funding row would eventually be settled. "Donor countries are aware that we need to change the psychology; that Bosnians need to see people with jobs, people who are

healthier, people with water and heat. They are also aware that unless these things happen, who knows what will happen at the end of the year [when Nato troops are due to withdraw]."

She said the international community had made a huge humanitarian contribution to Bosnia, but that this now had to be converted into reconstruction: "Ten dollars spent on seeds saves \$100 of food imports."

Mr Holbrooke will discuss Bosnian funding on his current tour of eastern, central and western European capitals. He said the US was fully committed to the reconstruction effort, but added: "We want the Europeans to contribute more and they want us to contribute more."

One particular problem for the Clinton administration is the difficulty of getting an aid package through the Republican-dominated Congress.

The international community's High Representative, Carl Bildt, denied that Europe's contribution would depend on the amount secured from the US. "The US Congress is one of the issues involved, but it is not the only one. Money is available from the European Commission but it may not be all the money that is needed."

Shrugging off criticism of his performance as High Representative, Mr Bildt said: "This is a global concern. We are expecting Japan and the Islamic countries to make a full contribution."

Ms Wallich said the World Bank was urging the Paris Club of creditor countries to be generous about Bosnia's debts. "I hope they will take a sympathetic view of the exceptional circumstances."

Davos Notebook, page 11



Defiant protest... Armed Chechens shoot anti-Russian slogans from the top of a lorry during a rally on Saturday in Tsotsin-Yurt, 22 miles south of the Chechen capital Grozny. Russian armoured vehicles advanced on the former presidential palace in Grozny yesterday after more than 1,000 supporters of the rebel Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev gathered for the second day to demand the withdrawal of Russian troops

New boss of news agency 'a threat to freedom'

Paul Webster in Paris

FRENCH newspapers expressed concern yesterday at government interference in the appointment of a new chairman for the state-subsidised Agence France-Presse (AFP), the world's third-biggest news agency after Reuters and AP.

Liberation said the appointment of Jean Miot, aged 55, chairman of the board at the rightwing Le Figaro newspaper, would harm the credibility and independence of an agency often seen as France's official voice. Liberation claimed AFP's reputation had been stained by the "disastrous behaviour" of the prime minister, Alain Juppé, who played an active part in Mr Miot's nomination.

Le Monde pointed out that nine government MPs contributed to Le Figaro and recalled that President Jacques Chirac had cast doubt on the agency's independence last year by predicting that Mr Miot would become head of AFP — before the job was available.

The Gaullist-led government has already intervened in the appointment of state-owned radio and television chiefs, arousing fears that it is determined to take control of the main media outlets to ensure more favourable coverage.

High-level dissatisfaction has been expressed at the way AFP reported allegations of corruption against the prime minister in connection with cut-price rents for council flats for him and his family.

The journalists' trade union, the Syndicat national de la presse écrite (SNPE), warned AFP's 1,100 staff to be "vigilant" for possible plans to change the statute guaranteeing its independence.

Mr Miot, chairman of the national newspaper federation, was strongly criticised by other unions, including the Socialist-led CFDT, which said AFP's independence was being sold off.

Poles plan to dig up skeletons

A bill to trace informers is causing alarm, writes Matthew Brzezinski

POLAND, on the heels of the spying scandal which forced the prime minister, Jozef Oleksy, to step down amid allegations that he worked for Russian intelligence, has become the latest east European country planning to delve into its past and shake skeletons from its collective cupboard.

Few will have forgotten the wave of divorces in East Germany when, after 1989, it was disclosed that even spouses had informed on one another to the Stasi, or the trauma surrounding the former Czech dissident Jan Svoboda, disgraced for allegedly co-operating with communist security forces.

But Warsaw's project to dip into its communist past has a twist. The bill's author is the new president, Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former communist. Not surprisingly, thousands of Poles are anxiously looking over their shoulders. But Mr Kwasniewski's party colleagues do not appear to be losing any sleep over the measure.

"The president's project is a sword that cuts one way," said Professor Andrzej Paczkowski, a political scientist. "It appears primarily to target former dissidents." It is feared vengeful SB agents may have doctored documents to incriminate dissidents as the communist regime fell.

Under the plan, informers who worked for the SB, the communist-era secret police, can be forced out of public office. But former bona fide agents would continue to operate.

Former members of the nomenklatura would also be absolved.

Former communists, who now control parliament and the government, and their allies from the old secret police had little to fear, Prof Paczkowski said. The screening of people for co-operating with the old secret police without "decommunisation" had no logic. "It's at best a half-measure."

At the headquarters of the Freedom Union, the opposition party that groups former Solidarity activists, consternation over the bill is running high.

"It's not a screening process," complained Gwidon Wujcik, an MP. "It serves to cleanse ex-communists." Mr Wujcik said that his party would be hit hard by the bill if approved by parliament.

Another concern is the authenticity of the estimated 3 million files the secret police kept that would form the basis for screening.

The most damaging files were destroyed as the Communist regime collapsed. It is thought likely that many files were doctored to incriminate dissidents by bitter SB agents and that innocent Poles may have been added to lists of informants by ambitious agents seeking to impress bosses.

Doctors' files brought down the government of the anti-communist prime minister, Jan Olszewski, in 1992, when he started screening innocent MPs were named as informants and Mr Olszewski had to resign because of the mistakes.

Ironically, the man chosen to replace Mr Oleksy, the ex-communist Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, was named in 1989 as an informant. Under the criteria of the new screening process, however, he would also be absolved of any wrongdoing.

But even those found guilty of co-operating with the SB could keep their jobs if superiors do not want to sack them — a measure that could further protect former communists holding top posts.

Parliament is to vote on the bill later this month.

Swedish men suffer surge in violence by women

Greg McIvor in Stockholm

MEN in Sweden are on the receiving end of an upsurge in violent assaults by their wives and girlfriends, according to figures published yesterday.

Some 300 men lodged official complaints last year after suffering partners' attacks by a growing incidence of violence by women against men, the Stockholm daily newspaper Expressen reported.

One complainant, Magnus Eriksson, aged 25, launched criminal proceedings against his former girl-

friend after allegedly being physically battered while being ejected from the flat the couple shared.

"She hit me twice, hard in the face, and spat on me," he said. The woman, described as "older and athletic", then allegedly knocked him over and pinned him down. "She screamed as loud as she could in my left ear. I constantly hear a beeping noise in it now."

Mr Eriksson, who claims the injury has impaired his musical career, said not all men had muscles like Rambo or Arnold Schwarzenegger, and many felt embarrassed to report vio-

lence against them by women.

"I am not seeking revenge. But I must exercise the right that so few Swedish men in our land of equality choose to exercise," he said.

Sweden, with almost equal numbers of men and women in work, is renowned for its equality. But researchers say many male battery victims are too ashamed to report cases.

Mikael Rytting, of the National Crime Prevention Board, said: "It is a bit like incest. Once you start to talk about it, more and more comes up to the surface."

Chernobyl effects 'not properly studied'

David Hearst in Tulsa

MILLIONS of victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster are not getting the compensation due to them because the Russian government cannot afford it.

In the Tulsakaya region south of Moscow, one of several Russian regions affected by the radioactive fallout, victims have not received their monthly remittances since last August.

The payments have always been controversial. Some scientists believe they are a political gesture rather than a reflection of environmental damage caused and the risk of living in the affected areas.

Yesterday a leading Russian specialist on radioactive fallout, Leonid Ilyin, said in Moscow that Russia and the international community had lost a historic chance to monitor the medical effects of the incident.

He said the people who had suffered most were the liquidators: military reservists who were sent into the shut-

Cracked sarcophagus threatens fallout replay

ALMOST ten years after the Chernobyl nuclear power station exploded, restrictions on the sale of lamb from contaminated British farmland 1,500 miles away are slowly being removed, *David Fairhall writes.*

But by the time the ban is finally lifted, according to a new study by Adi Roche, director of The Chernobyl Children's Project, the concrete sarcophagus around

the reactor to shovel highly radioactive debris from the roofs and surrounding buildings. In the first three critical months about 10,000 of them were used.

"None of these men was registered by name. None was checked on a regular basis, using standardised methodology. They all went back to their homes and were registered with the local medical authorities."

No one could say with certainty how much radiation

in danger of bursting. Yet Ukraine and the European Union cannot raise enough money to build a new containment building.

It may already be too late, Ms Roche writes. "The next Chernobyl will be Chernobyl."

Meanwhile, by international standards, only 1 per cent of Belarus, which absorbed 70 per cent of the fallout, is uncontaminated.

Each man suffered, because the method of determining the levels was so imprecise. Radiation readings were averaged and on this figure the men were allowed to work in the area — ranging from two minutes in the most dangerous to 10 minutes in the less dangerous — was based.

The only way to "reconstruct" each man's dose was an elaborate and expensive test on a sample of tooth enamel.

Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident. Even the title was a mistake. You can not liquidate its consequences, you can only weaken them. Nothing similar had ever happened before. For 10 days radioactive material was being thrown out into the atmosphere.

Eight million people in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were declared to have lived in zones affected by the catastrophe. But, Prof Ilyin said, no real scientific study was conducted to see how they were affected and what by.

He maintains, controversially, that many of the effects noticed in cattle in these regions were caused by the overuse of fertilisers rather than radioactive fallout.

The liquidators usually meet in their home towns on the anniversary of the disaster. Although the government has frequently promised to pay their invalidity pensions on time, and give them flats, they regard themselves as the forgotten heroes of the disaster, many still paying with their lives.

Spanish youth welcomes pin-striped challenger to 'old, corrupt' Socialists

Voters too young to remember Franco warm to an uncharismatic rightwing leader, writes Adela Gooch in Madrid

WHEN Felipe Gonzalez, Spain's veteran Socialist prime minister, visited Madrid law faculty the students jeered "liar and thief". When José María Aznar, leader of the conservative opposition, came to call they gave him a rousing ovation.

The response reflects a shift that will almost certainly propel Mr Aznar's Popular Party (PP) into office in the general election on March 3. He is making a strong attempt to win an all-out majority, to govern unhampered by Catalan and Basque nationalists who would otherwise hold the balance of power.

The polls give him about 40 per cent of the vote; the Socialists slightly more than 30 per cent and the United Left (IU), or former communists, 12 per cent.

Spanish youth, the under-25s, who include about a million first time voters, are a critical, possibly decisive, constituency with firm views. Those on the centre-right support the PP; those on the left, the IU. The Socialists barely get a look in.

"They have nothing new to say," María Martínez, a student lawyer, aged 20, says. "They're old and corrupt. The country needs a real overhaul."

Both Mr Gonzalez and Mr Aznar are lawyers. The simi-

larities stop there. In his corduroy jacket-wearing youth, Mr Gonzalez, now aged 53, aroused a passionate following. Mr Aznar, aged 42, a sober, pin-striped-suited former tax inspector, provokes a cautious response. He is wooing voters with a tough prescription: financial austerity and administrative integrity after 13 years of spendthrift, dishonest Socialist rule.

Despite his self-professed lack of charisma, the young warm to him. Referring to Mr Gonzalez's vaulted powers of seduction, he says: "Spain has had enough of it."

"He seems a more decent bloke than Gonzalez. It's time for a change," says Eva Robles, aged 21, a student at Madrid's catering and tourism college, where training for a job in Spain's biggest earning industry begins at the age of 14.

Many PP policies are aimed at the young, including a proposal to reduce compulsory military service from nine months to six. Both parties make job creation a priority.

Spain has one of the highest general unemployment rates in Europe, at more than 20 per cent. The figure is double that for the under-25s. The Socialists propose sharing out the work available. Mr Aznar promises to activate the job market by gradually cutting taxes, improving



José María Aznar: Former tax inspector bound for office

professional training and making it easier to hire and sack workers. The young, less concerned than other groups by his claim to be able to do this without cutting welfare spending approve.

"I think with Aznar there'll be more work and the conditions will be better," Jaime Martínez, a trainee hotel manager, says.

The PP, presenting itself as a centre party to avoid links with the right's fascist past, is moderate on social issues — excessively so for some tastes. "We should make it much harder to obtain an abortion," says María Meiras, a law student in yuppie garb. "You can't do that," her friend Santiago objects. "You alienate centrists."

Those aged over 50, who manned the barricades against General Franco and formed the backbone of Socialist support, often appear exasperated by their more moderate descendants.

But it is a credit to them that younger Spaniards should take democracy for granted rather than treating it with the circumspection and occasional abuse reserved for an unfamiliar toy.

In the law faculty, a bunch of students in leather and jeans sit cross-legged on the floor. "Of course, we worry about politics," Raúl, aged 19, says. "We're lawyers, we think about these issues."

Both he and his friend María José plan to vote for the IU. "They're the real Socialists,"

Maria José says. They say the judicial process underway to try a former minister and other members of the administration for alleged links with "death squad" killings of suspected Basque separatists in the mid 1980s should "go ahead to the bitter end".

"Aznar has used the GAL [death squads] to get into power and now wants to close the issue because it is sensitive and could embarrass some of his own people," another student adds, demanding a "real debate on Europe like other countries have. Gonzalez thinks it's the greatest thing ever and doesn't give us a chance to think about it."

At the catering school, Mr Aznar has just finished his first-young visit where he toyed with steak tartare, stirred chicken stew and gingerly sipped a Manhattan cocktail.

A gaggle of aspiring chefs gather outside the door. Let's shout "facha, facha," (fascist, fascist) as he leaves, one suggests.

It is an unfair accusation. Mr Aznar's great achievement has been to silence the remnants of the old nationalistic, autocratic right in his ranks and blend them with former Christian Democrats and economic liberals into a democratic, centre-right force.

As he appears, the young dissenters' courage fails. Mr Aznar's visit where he only one of them dares to shout "Facha." The insult, feared, unheard by Mr Aznar and ignored by the youth's peers.

The tools for the job
Education reform will inevitably cost money

HOW much joy would there be in football if correspondents and commentators permanently focused on the perennial strugglers at the bottom of division three: Lincoln City, Darlington, Northampton? Indeed, how much joy would there be if attention was confined to the losers in the premier league: Coventry, QPR and dare we say it, Manchester City? Football is joyful because winners get more attention than losers. Television producers vie with each other for the most attractive teams: Manchester United, Newcastle and perhaps the occasional London club. So three cheers for the Chief Inspector's annual report yesterday for including a list of 200 specially commended schools. Nursery, primary, and secondary schools were all included in this "testament to success". They are not just achieving good results but are doing so "in comparison to schools in similar circumstances". It is not just a leafy suburb list. The inner city is there too.

There is, as usual, a downside also. Ever since an earlier Chief Inspector lifted the curtain in 1988, media coverage has been dominated by the bad news: the one in three classes which were rated poor or unsatisfactory. This coverage is not just because of the media's carnivorous appetite. Children's futures are involved too. Millions of them. This year's report is not comparable to the late 1980 editions, but the findings have a familiar ring: one in three primary lessons and one in five in the early years of secondary education were rated as unsatisfactory. The gap between the good and the bad remains as wide as ever: "the most successful secondary schools achieve GCSE results twice as good as others in similar socio-economic circumstances and six times better than those achieved by the least successful in less favoured areas." Such disparities cannot be ignored by policy-makers, the profession

or the public. What the Chief Inspector's snapshot cannot capture is the process of change. Just as the *Flowden* reforms in the 1960s were already being introduced into primary schools before the Committee reported, so too the recommendations of the "three wise men" were already beginning to take hold even as their report was released in January, 1992. It is not just the inspectors but researchers who found there had been too big a move away from whole class learning in primary schools. But the research figures quoted by the Chief Inspector yesterday on primary learning settings (eight per cent in groups, 15 per cent in class and 77 per cent on their own) may already be shifting. We will have a better idea next year when the first returns of a new monitoring process on primaries will be available. But even the Chief Inspector acknowledges "an increasing willingness of teachers to review good practice".

Good schools need more than good teachers. There are two other crucial determinants: leadership and resources. The importance of head-teachers is now widely recognised with much more attention being paid to their training and the skills which they need. All heads have been given more freedom and more control over their budgets. What remains in dispute is the role of resources. The Education Secretary tries to dismiss its importance by pointing to schools which have succeeded despite their financial handicaps. That is not good enough. Yesterday's report refers to the "disturbing" shortage of books and equipment in some schools and the shortfall in accommodation affecting 1,000 secondary schools and 3,000 primaries. Then there is the under-funding of nursery education, which is crucial in raising primary standards. Simple maths dictate schools need more pennies and pounds.

There is no quick fix in Bosnia

The political means to peace still need to be worked out

US SECRETARY of State Warren Christopher will be back again. His trip to Sarajevo and Belgrade may have been judged a success but the hard part lies ahead. Superficially Mr Christopher's enterprise can be compared to his mediation in the Middle East: no one expects that to produce results in a hurry. In former Yugoslavia too, he is being cast as the firm but kindly "father figure". But there is a significant difference. The US has been nudging along a dialogue between Israel and Syria for the past five years as part of a broader long-term commitment to the region. Washington has only plunged in to the Balkan pool over the past year, previously it just dipped an inconsistent toe. Worse still, there is an implied cut-off date for effective intervention since the Clinton administration has made no secret of its desire to get out within the year.

Last week a leaked report from the White House, summarising the views of all the US intelligence agencies, took a pessimistic view of the future beyond 1996. It said that the former combatants would continue to share a deep mutual mistrust, seeking to achieve their fundamental goals while rejecting compromise. We would like to believe that this is over-gloomy. The Middle East has shown how the habit of reconciliation can grow over time when there are the minimum conditions for peace. But Bosnia is far less stable while at the same time its own peace process is much less flexible. The Dayton agree-

ment delivered the end — a fine federal structure on paper with any number of relevant appendices. But it left the political means to be worked out painfully on the ground. What has been achieved so far has been almost entirely in the military sphere. The rival factional armies have pulled back along nearly one thousand kilometres and have vacated whole regions which are being swapped between the Sarajevo-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb "entity." This achievement should not be belittled and there is a welcome determination of the Nato forces to act decisively. But the political agenda presents a long list of problems ahead. These include investigating war crimes and human rights issues, seeking to check the de facto spread of ethnic cleansing as territories are exchanged (let alone reverse its consequences), holding democratic elections within six to nine months, restoring law and order and establishing an effective police force, tackling the crisis presented by hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, and rebuilding the devastated infrastructure of the entire region.

It would be wiser not to lean exclusively on Mr Christopher. The European contributors to the Nato force quietly realise now that — whatever the imperatives of Mr Clinton's re-election campaign — they cannot pull out so fast from Bosnia. This in turn requires much greater diplomatic effort and more support for Carl Bildt in pursuing the civilian objectives of Dayton.

Just add DNA to taste

You say tomato, I say genetic nightmare

THE TOMATO was destined to become an early candidate for genetic engineering. Long before recent events caused it to be dubbed "Frankenstein's plant", it led a Jekyll and Hyde existence. For a start it's a fruit that thinks it is a vegetable: a native of South America yet was first eaten in Britain before finding horticultural perfection in Italy: it is harmless yet was thought during the 19th century to be poisonous. With a CV like that no wonder it feels confused. There is no doubt also that during the 20th century it has undergone a personality change. It simply doesn't taste as nice as it did decades ago.

Yesterday Sainsbury's and Safeway introduced what Tony Blair might call New Tomato — a puree made from tomatoes genetically modified by blocking out the action of an enzyme which rots the fruit. The initial reaction from a panel of trainee chefs assembled by

the Press Association was that it was a "hit". But this is only the first step towards what could be the next agricultural revolution. Crick and Watson didn't labour in their laboratories just to produce a modified sauce for hamburgers. Soon there will be genetically modified bananas, melons and caffeine-free coffee. If they don't meet consumer resistance then more and more of our food and drink will be affected by genetic engineering. There are grave potential dangers as the Genetics Forum warned yesterday. But there are also huge opportunities for enrichment. Most people will agree with the Consumers Association that, providing the products are properly tested, there is no reason why they should not be sold — as long as the consumer is given a choice. Who knows, one day they may even find a way for the tomato to have a sex change so it can become the fully fledged vegetable it clearly craves to be.



Letters to the Editor

An economics tutorial

IN LINE with the Guardian's view that a graduate tax is "the fairest way of repaying the benefits of university life", shouldn't everyone in the country who ever benefited now make repayments (Leader, February 3)? At one time, a university degree was thought to enable the holder to earn a higher income and therefore pay more tax, which in itself is a way of repaying society. In addition to the greater contribution a graduate is, in principle, able to make. Isn't the underfunding of all services a consequence of Tory dogma: the divine right of the individual to keep as much of his own money as possible?

THE need for an alternative to the current university funding system is undeniable. However, the Conservative solution ignores the problems of those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It also fails to mention the need for a repayment system which must necessarily be linked to income. These issues must be tackled if the economy is to retain talented people attracted to the "caring" professions which

are notoriously badly paid, yet require education to degree level.
Arun Arora,
West Midlands NUS Area
Convener 1994-5,
144 Selly Park Road,
Selly Park,
Birmingham B29 7LE.

IT IS the new equivalent of the first cuckoo of spring: "Vice-chancellors propose top-up fees". Each year for almost a decade, someone from their august ranks has made such a proposal. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals should decide what education system they aspire to. They can continue to squeeze more students into the system without extra resources or they can tell the Government that expansion without additional funding has to stop. Or they can choose to abandon the principle of free tuition that has been a cherished hallmark of British higher education for many years.
Tim Walker,
61 Ravenshaw Street,
London NW8.

THE most pressing question that is always asked when hopeful sixth-formers are being shown around university is not "How good is

the course?", but "How much in debt will I be?" (swiftly followed by "Where's the Job Centre?"). With current proposals to abolish grants and make loans larger, the only people left taking degrees will be those lucky few whose loan will be paid off by mum and dad and people like myself who take every penny available and will think about the consequences later (I'm currently looking at around £8,000 by the time I finish).

It appears that the change in demography of students in recent years, from the elite few to the classless many, is only going to be a brief adventure for this country's institutions.
Ben Wheeler,
Kim Tree Cottage,
The Green,
Frampton-on-Severn,
Gloucestershire GL2 7EZ.

IWOULD suggest that those undergraduates who have successfully completed at least one year of postgraduate research have their tuition loans written off. This is because they will have generally carried out useful research work for little financial return.
Alexander Chable,
23 Goulston Road,
Manchester M20 4ZE.

The royals' private lives, philosophically speaking

MARY Midgley (To do the decent thing, February 2) is quite right to highlight the tension between ideals and practices as "the elastic that pulls us forward". For most of us, steadfast adherence to high ethical principles frequently has no practical moral bearing: by deciding to leave one's car at home, or to refuse certain privileges for one's family, our solitary acts of self-sacrifice serve only to purify our moral consciences.

But senior public figures are in a different league. They have unprecedented power to confer on their private decisions a moral value by explaining their ideal to the rest of society and offering their conduct as an example. With unique access to mass means of communications, these people can transform purely symbolic acts of principle into exemplary moral behaviour which influences the conduct of others.
Our public figures are therefore hypocritical when they justify their self-interested actions with claims that they are those of "tens of thousands of parents up and down the country".
Finn Bowring,
5 Ladysmith Avenue,
Sheffield S7 1SF.

selected specifically to take part in the making of policy. They are politicians, in Holland, Scandinavia, Germany, Ireland and the US, monarchs/presidents are chosen to represent the state on formal occasions. Yet we alone among them keep the trappings of a full-blown aristocratic, even feudal, leader, long after political powers have been stripped away. The difference here between form and substance is immense. Dr Midgley's "elastic" is near breaking-point.
David Heskeith,
Lindisfarne,
Northumberland Road,
Tynes and Wear NE40 3PT.

ITHINK I can answer Bel Mooney's question (Letters, February 1) about why journalists like Catherine Bennett hate the Prince of Wales so much, and so reflexively. It's not his chaotic and less-than-perfect personal life, but his open commitments to communities, the environment, multi-cultural continuities, and the reality of soul or spirit.

Such things are deeply offensive and indeed personally threatening for the modernist unreligion of secularism, of which the great majority of journalists are devout members. In extreme cases, this takes the form of loathing anything that does not answer directly to the body's direct physical and emotional needs, and clinging to a sour-greedy of rationalism, materialism and jejune cynicism. Julie Burchill's crowning of Catherine Bennett (Letters, February 2), whose every column drips with the vinegar, perfectly makes my point. But the soul is like any other organ in at least one respect: it shrivels from disuse. Burchill ought to be able to understand that.
Patrick Curry,
1 Redan Street,
London W14 0AD.

BEL MOONEY has rightly risen in support of the royal family and of the decent values shared by the majority of the British population. The disagreeable tone of Julie Burchill's letter exposes the lie that violence is the chief common denominator of humanity in all its real repulsiveness in an age in which (as Yeats put it) "the ceremony of innocence is drowned". Ours is certainly a less happy society due to the corruption of the cynical media's malevolent influence upon us all.
Hugh Berger,
The National Forum Trust,
34 Kensington Park Gardens,
London W11 2QT.

We do care

WE AGREE with everything said about the new asylum law by the Bishop of Wilkes, and other (Letters, February 3), except their statement that "we can only assume that no political party is willing to sustain a just system of dealing with refugees because of the unpopularity of their cause at the polls".

There is no more bitter experience in politics than coming under friendly fire for not doing what one has done. Other parties may wish to speak for themselves. For the liberal Democrats, we opposed these regulations with passion and a three-line whip in both Houses. If the authors of the letter can show us one act either of commission or omission by which we may have given the impression that our opposition to these regulations was anything less than total, we would be grateful if they could tell us so that we can correct this wrong impression.

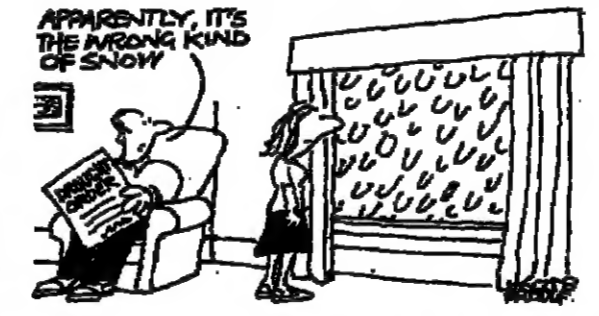
Before doing so, we would be grateful if they could consult the Bishop of Ripon, who speaks for the bishops on this issue in the House of Lords, whose admirable contributions have been even worse reported than ours, and, being present throughout the Lords debate, can confirm everything in this letter.
Liz Lyman MP,
David Aiton MP,
Earl Russell,
Baroness Williams,
(Liberal Democrats in the House of Commons and House of Lords),
Houses of Parliament,
Westminster,
London SW1A 0AA.

Smoke screen

SO Adrian Rogers did not actually watch a blue movie (Labour delight as blue movie row gives star role to Tory, February 5) — he stayed outside and "worked the lights". Just as Bill Clinton smoked cannabis — "but did not inhale". How long before a politician admits to sleeping with a woman — "but did not insert"?
David Buckingham,
24 Hill Close,
Pennsylvania,
Essex EX4 6RG.

Smoke screen

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a telephone number.



Yorkshire Water's leaky logic

AMAN in his seventies tells me that in years past, after a heavy snowfall, council workers would shovel the snow off the streets and on to lorries, then tip the loads into the River Don.

Ten inches of snow fall on Sheffield for a week, the pavements are covered with ice, and the roads narrowed by

piles of snow. Yorkshire Water announces that drought measures must apply, because reservoir levels are so low. And 20,000 people in Sheffield are jobless. Are these things connected?
Philip Mulliner,
289 Abbeydale Road,
Sheffield,
S Yorkshire S7 1PJ.

A brief lesson in Greek philosophy

THE totally avoidable conundrum described by Leonard Doyle (Academic upsurge at barmaged book, February 2) could be a blow to freedom of expression, but not in Greece. In our country we deeply respect and live by the famous dictum: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it".

Freedom of speech is total in Greece, to such an extent that some people (thankfully different ones, at different times and on different issues) never cease complaining it is being abused. There is argument, often passionate, and refutation, often vehement — but never any violence. The worst possible fate that could befall a Cambridge University Press book on an anthropological subject in Greece would be indifference, spiced perhaps with the odd verbal attack against it in the column of some obscure extremist publication. Intolerant voices do of course exist, as in most countries, but so far they have always dismally failed to silence anyone. In Greece at least.
Elias Goumaris,
Ambassador,
Greek Embassy,
1a Holland Park,
London W11 3TP.

on CUP to suppress a book. In 1972, after two years' intensive work at CUP's request, I completed *The Politics of Medical Manpower*, a book dealing with conditions of work in the NHS. The NHS was at the time facing reforms under Sir Keith Joseph, and the nation now knows only too painfully how far that particular philosophy has led. The original reader applauded the manuscript and pronounced it ready for publication.

A second reader was immediately brought in and, at the instance of Anthony Wilson (who has now risen to Chief Executive), the book was summarily refused. Through legal action I came to see CUP's internal file on the book, revealing the second reader as sending the MS to the Department of Health & Social Security, later adding the rider: "I think it is important that the author should not know that his book has been read by DHSS because it was read unofficially by a DHSS staff member who should remain anonymous."

Here was glaring evidence of DHSS interference leading to covert censorship and restriction of academic freedom. Now history is seemingly repeating itself.
Adrian Tibbitts,
Haytons Bent, West Road,
Shrewton, Salisbury,
Wiltshire SP3 4EB

A Country Diary

CHESHIRE: From the road, the path into the western woods led down the steep valley slope to the river bank and, once under the trees, I was out of the bitter easterly wind that had persisted for several days. It was still cold but at least I was sheltered from those cutting, icy blasts. A passer-by, being walked by his dog, paused long enough to tell me how quiet it was. "Everything is still asleep," he said, and so it appeared at first glance. Only the sound of running water broke the silence, as the river rushed over and around smooth-edged rocks that had been exposed as the water level dropped in the prolonged drought. But life was beginning to stir in the wood: in a secluded corner, hidden away from general view, straight and narrow, grey-green leaves of the wild daffodil had appeared, and were about two inches tall; still curled over, with tiny green buds brushing the soil, and leaves tightly

closed, some stems of dogs mercury had been tempted out into the open. But most noticeable were the few bright yellow hazel catkins that had fully opened. I hadn't noticed much bird activity until a nuthatch flew into a beech tree close by and started to call. Almost immediately, a nearby silver birch was alive with birds — a winter feeding flock on its rounds. Long-tailed tits made up most of the group, chattering to each other as they flitted through the branches, the remainder being a mixture of great and blue tits and two tiny goldcrests working hard to keep up with the rest of the group. I watched them searching each nook and cranny, pecking, hovering and hanging, but never still. Suddenly, without warning, they were off, moving quickly through the trees along the river bank and as I turned to head back to the road, the wood had gone quiet again.
J.M. THOMPSON

Handwritten signature: J.M. Thompson

Diary
Matthew Norman

THE recent history of the Times is replete with triumphs (share-fice frolics, becoming a Microsoft Freshet, the entire editorship of Gentleman Charlie Wilson...), but we always squeeze in one more. Hats aloft, then, to editor Peter Stothard, who has banned the Oxford modern historian Norman Stone from a regular column. After sending a piece to the Times, Professor Stone topped up in Henry Porter's piece in Thursday's Guardian, illustrating the decline in intellectual standards with the words: "Look at, for instance, the way the Times is going." Later that morning, a fax arrived. "It was from Daniel Johnson - yes, Paul's son - at the Times," says the Professor. "He's an old mate, and was very contrite about it, but he said that Peter Stothard was livid, and had banned me from writing for the paper again." The Professor confesses a sense of shock. "It's pretty staggering. If you fill your pages with loads of stuff about underwear, you can hardly pretend it's the same paper as it was 30 years ago. Still, I'll survive." Indeed so, and so will the spiked article, which will appear on this page soon.

FROM the Lynne Franks PR agency comes news of the most enticing national event since the ill-fated Splash and Flush Week. National Frone Week starts on February 19, and the press release from Rachel begs us to call, "should you require any facts and figures on California prunes". I ring at once, and swiftly learn that from August 1 to December 31, 1996, all Californian prunes were imported. That is Rachel's only fact so far, but she will search for more. And what are the main events planned for Frone Week? "Basically," says Rachel, "it's a week-long worship of the prune." "No events at all, then?" "No, none."

SA Y what you will about my old friend Harry Greenway, you must admire his timing. Last Friday, we learned how the cerebral MP for Ealing North stopped a road-safety plan wanted by all else because it would have added seconds to the drive to Parliament he prefers to a fatiguing three-minute walk. Also on Friday, meanwhile, Harry's regular column appeared in the Ealing Gazette. His topic? "Make this the year roads are sorted" was the headline, beneath which that fearless warrior for road improvement wrote of one traffic scheme: "Ealing Council must pull its finger out and get on with the job, before the people of Northolt really rise up in indignation." Could you make it up? I'm by no means convinced that you could.

IN yet another political masterstroke, the Deputy Prime Minister advises small businesses to delay paying their debts as long as possible. The Diary looks forward to Mr Heseltine pushing through a refund (backdated to 1994, if you please) for those who paid huge fines for lateness in paying their VAT.

STEVEN Murray writes from Dumfries with an engaging tale about Prince Philip. This one was not taped in the orthodox manner, but witnessed by a driver in the Diplomatic Protection Branch. Some years ago, Philip was heading for the north of Scotland when his train broke down, stranding him on a remote and freezing station platform in the early hours. When the driver arrived to collect the Duke, he found a very nervous station manager leading him towards his office, muttering: "Step this way, sir, and I shall entertain you until the train is fixed." "Why?" said the Duke, staring icily at the man. "Are you a circus juggler?" I bet Kitty Keller hasn't got that one in her wretched little book.

THE postponement of a railway privatisation because of alleged ticket fraud has given rise to a new platform announcement. Trains between London and Southend were cancelled on Sunday morning due to the wrong kind of thieves on the track.

I SHIPPED THE BONES FOR A CERTAINLY FRESH TOWN

Even common sense gets the veto

Commentary
Hugo Young

HELMUT KOHL used to be the man John Major courted for his love. Now he is the man the Tory party loves to hate. In each guise he has served the purpose of the moment. It's a commentary on the utter unreliability of Mr Major's own European trajectory that the Chancellor's shift from prophet to demon is a perception he doesn't even begin to resist.

Kohl is a man of our time, but also of another time. He bestrides Europe today, but his idea of Europe was formed the day before yesterday. Since that formation occurred when his country came close to destroying Europe in the worst war in history, it's neither surprising nor ignoble that Kohl's attitude draws on an abundant fear of nationalism. At the weekend, he made a defining speech which urged the sons of modern Europe to remember this, and not to retard the process of integration. For such apprehensions, he is joyously rebuked by British Conservatives as some creature out of the ark.

These ideas of Kohl's, drawing on the last war to make an omen for the next, are certainly unfashionable. They contest the achievement of the very institution into which he is seeking to breathe new life, the European Union. The historic case for the EU has been precisely that it made war unthinkable, a condition which Talleyrand and Bismarck, Palmerston and even Churchill, could never have conceived of. Yet the German leader asks us to doubt the permanence of this, while Tory Euro-phobes ask us to acclaim it as a construct so durable that it needs no further vigilance.

This contrast is much more than an ironic paradox. Ridiculing Kohl's fear of war is a way of evading the real challenge he presents, which concerns a larger continent than the west of Europe, and invites the partners of the present EU to consider how they should address the many nationalisms seething on their borders. War between France and Germany may be an unlikely prospect even than the resurrection of Jean Monnet and Francois Mitterrand from their tombs. But how smaller "Europe" handles Greater Europe is a question which should dominate the

coming Intergovernmental Conference to review the Maastricht Treaty. It's a question the British Conservative Government has disqualified itself from answering. Not only does Britain have no solution, it has all but abdicated the right to be heard in any forum of constructive argument on the subject. So driven by Tory divisions has the Prime Minister allowed himself to become that he seems incapable of permitting a single particle of the national interest to be heard in any forum of constructive argument on the subject. So driven by Tory divisions has the Prime Minister allowed himself to become that he seems incapable of permitting a single particle of the national interest to be heard in any forum of constructive argument on the subject.

Consider his present stance. There's quite a lot to be said for his scepticism about economic and monetary union, his attitude of wait-and-see. Actually, everyone will wait and see. The British opt-out is not, in the real world, as unique a quarantine against infection as the Government pretends. But Britain, under either party, now seems almost certain to withhold sterling until it can be seen whether the new euro-currency works. Although the more zealous partners detest the gloating pessimism they hear from London, the broad British position is one they understand.

But what has accompanied it? Not an effort to be constructive on other matters, but root-and-branch hostility to every initiative being floated before the IGC. Prudent statesmanship would have ordained some conspicuous displays of belief in the EU project at other levels. In particular, it would suggest recognising a single proposition of vital interest to any country which is as keen as Britain is on the enlargement of "Europe": that the EU must further integrate, or die. Instead there has been none of this. Close scrutiny of ministerial attitudes over the past two years throws up hardly a single statement about the EU which is other than critical, aggressive, disdainful or corrective. The awful stage has been reached where the only minister who breaks the pattern, Kenneth Clarke, is being readied for kebabbing.

This treason on common-sense, now assumed to be so normal that perhaps I should feel embarrassed to mention it, has many consequences. Take only the area to which

Chancellor Kohl so ridiculously draws attention. Maastricht created the idea of a common foreign and security policy, and wrote into law the availability of qualified majority voting to conduct it — as long as everyone, in a particular crisis, reached prior agreement to use the process. Very little has happened. The Bosnian disaster proved to be deeper than Europe could handle, and Douglas Hurd's assertion that the use of GMV would have changed nothing may be correct. But instead of

favour, compared with 32 per cent of Germans. The euro is not Kohl's only problem. Away from the tensions and quarrels over the euro, the bigger perspective sees Germany acutely ill-at-ease with the vision of itself as the principal external agent promoting economic and political stability in the former communist world on its eastern borders. This too is a project that Kohl wants subsumed within a bigger integrated Europe. In its absence Germany fears being left on its own with a problem to which, for geographical reasons alone, it can never be indifferent.

AS the Chancellor stressed at the weekend, Germany has its own reasons for being keener on European union than some others. "We have more neighbours than any other country in Europe," Kohl said. "What happens in those countries affects us directly, and vice versa." In other words, if the EU fails to integrate eastern Europe, Germany will feel forced to do it alone. This irresistiibility triggers Germany's great postwar neurosis.

Help us not to be ourselves, runs the troubled subtext of German European policy. The us to the most like Ulysses, that we be not tempted to pursue our interests. Bind us at this year's Inter-Governmental Conference with a European common foreign and security policy (CFSP), by majority voting if necessary. Yet the irony and magic — is that even Germany will break the bounds when it perceives its national interests at stake. The locus classicus here was the fateful recognition of Croatia by Europe at the end of 1991. This was pushed through by Bonn when, had a system of voting such as it now advocates been in force, Germany might have failed to get its way.

By instinct and inheritance, Germany remains fully signed up for the creation of a maximalist CFSP. Yet increasingly this too sounds like an old and unachievable agenda, repeated out of duty and for fear of the alternatives. The British certainly believe that they have the alternative. Foreign policy, said Malcolm Rifkind in Munich at a German-British seminar last weekend, is quintessentially intergovernmental. Nations can cooperate, but they cannot pretend they do not have interests which on occasion they will assert in defiance of the majority, especially where military matters were concerned. That point was rammed home by the junior defence minister Nicholas Soames, who told the Munich seminar that the IGC must keep its hands off defence. European policy had to be based on "identity through capability", code for a policy of "no weapons, no vote".

Listening to British ministers it is sometimes easy to forget that more EU nations are at ease with Bonn's vision of European policy than with London's. Britain's confidence that Germany has got it badly wrong over EMU seems to be feeding a more general Schadenfreude here towards Germany's European policy. Whether Kohl can finesse this twin problem is the unanswered question. Despite the war of words between Bonn and London, both sides have more in common than they may realise. A poll on the single currency last week produced virtually identical responses in both countries, with 34 per cent of traditionally sceptical Britons in

called on Kohl to take the lead in ordering a delay. Yet for several domestic reasons, it looks extremely unlikely that Bonn will follow Hurd's advice, at least in public. The first is that the German economy confronts a deep structural crisis. Kohl's response is widely viewed as less than adequate. The failed mark is already overvalued, hurting the country's export performance and costing it jobs — more than four million Germans are out of work.

Second, in his commitment to the euro, Kohl finds himself between a rock and a hard place. Beyond Germany, the Maastricht terms for currency convergence are proving too tough for less resilient regimes, meaning that only a minority of EU members will pass the EMU test. But inside Germany, Bundesbank stringency and a public reared on sound money may well revolt if Kohl bows to pressure to relax the terms. Whether Kohl can finesse this twin problem is the unanswered question. Despite the war of words between Bonn and London, both sides have more in common than they may realise. A poll on the single currency last week produced virtually identical responses in both countries, with 34 per cent of traditionally sceptical Britons in

Tessa stars in the revival of DIY

Tom Hodgkinson

ARE Peps the new rock 'n' roll? I only ask because there is a palpable sense in the air that we are moving towards a look-after-yourself economy, and a Personal Equity Plan, boring as it sounds, may be helpful. Government funding for universities, already cut back in favour of loans, could be about to end completely. Every week a newspaper carries a feature of the new insecure economy, on a work-place characterised by short-term contracts and freelancing. Banks are singularly unhelpful. We are all soon going to have to face the hell of self-assessment in our own affairs. We doubt that the Government will have enough cash to pay today's young people their pensions in 30 years. No longer, whether we like it or not, can we entrust our work and financial affairs to a third party.

Across the Atlantic, Republican presidential election candidate Steven Forbes has even proposed the idea of a flat 10 per cent tax rate, an idea that essentially admits to the notion of practically no government at all — with the attendant devastating effect on support structures such as the welfare state. The personal-finance industry has been quick to cash in, so to speak, on this cultural shift. Its adverts are starting to exploit our fears of less cushioning from government and employer. There are even signs that ads are attempting to reposition the industry, as they say in marketing, or to make money management cool, as the kids might have it. Which it is, in a way. Or at least could be. Or perhaps should be.

At the same time, younger people are beginning to realise that personal finance may not be as boring as it sounds. "If you'd put £1,000 in a Peps ten years ago," a friend said the other day, "you'd have three grand by now. In a building society, you'd have £1,500." Which doesn't sound bad. Not that I have a spare grand lying around. This cultural shift, I guess, is what Labour is trying to get at with its "stakeholder" concept. Old lefties bemoan the idea that the individuals who make up nations are being forced to take on more responsibility for their lives. A nation without a protective state is a brutal nation, they argue. Rather than complaining, a better way to view the future might be to think of

ourselves as dealers. This might sound as if I were describing Britain as a nation of shopkeepers, but the reality is more exciting. When you start to see yourself as an individual dealer, rather than an employee, a consumer, a union devotee or an acolyte of socialism, the world starts to look a little clearer. You feel a little more powerful. Having been charged £7.50 "management fee" and £35 something-else fee for going overdrawn for a day, I telephoned my bank. A quick rant later and the charges had been refunded. Complain! Discover your rights! Search out the information that landlords, employers, financial institutions and schools would rather you didn't have! The reality is that you can do deals with everyone. You can do deals in shops (in more civilised countries, it's known as haggling). You can do deals with your employer: less money, more time is one such popular move. After all, it might be wise to accept that we live in a capitalist economy, and that this is unlikely to change. Many are going to be left out. Are we heading towards a 10 per cent sorted, 90 per cent dazed-and-confused society? Unions were supposed to help us. What has happened to them? How much difference does it actually make to health workers' quality of life, for example, that their union manages — at vast expense to its members — to negotiate a wage increase of a quarter of one per cent?



Tom Hodgkinson

THE real value of unions — or some version of unions — should be to provide information and legal advice to its members. By focusing all the efforts on pay wage increases, and by arrogantly presuming to represent their members' interests to the management, they do the working people a huge disservice. In today's brutal economy, a far more helpful service would be to provide advice or negotiation, so that individual members gain the confidence to do their own deals and control their own lives. My government doesn't represent what I think about the world: why should I assume that my union should do so? Unions have a political agenda that they tastelessly assume is shared by their members. Not so.

A solution may be non-political small societies or guilds. For a low fee, a small team of people could gather relevant information on the industry for its members. They could have helplines. A newsletter covering new developments, legal rights, personal reports of battles with clients or employers. Combine that with Peps, Tessa's pensions and mortgages and we have the possibility, funnily enough, of being free — a nation of dealers, in control of our destinies.



Going overboard

As Hugo Young (above) condemns Britain's reaction to Helmut Kohl, Ian Traynor and Martin Kettle explain why he clings to his high-risk strategy

HELMUT Kohl's fondness for invoking the spectre of European hellfire has always raised British establishment hackles. Should Europe spurn his vision of a federalised political union, the German Chancellor never tires of stressing, the continent is doomed to return to its ugly historical alter ego — nationalism, protectionism, destructive balance-of-power politics, resulting in trade wars and perhaps real wars.

In his 14th year in power Kohl has no clear-cut successor able to command the authority and prestige that he brings to the pursuit of European policy. The fear that it will turn to a nightmare when he has gone is fed by a profound sense of insecurity and the German elite's fear of themselves and their fellow countrymen. There is an eagerness, unique in Europe, to dissolve the national identity and embrace "Europemness" as if to escape from the bur-

dens of being German. The best concrete current example of this phenomenon is Kohl's undilected commitment to trading in the Deutschmark, paramount and most cherished symbol of post-war Germany, in favour of the nebulous and unloved euro. For Kohl, if not for the rigorous Bundesbank, economic and monetary union (EMU) is neither primarily an economic nor a monetary project. It is essentially a political scheme, a crucial staging post on the way to political union and a key move in realising the Kohl dream, helping to make the putative Euro-federation irreversible before he leaves office.

This is one reason why, in the present heated debate across Europe over EMU and despite the grim economic indices, he will not countenance tampering either with the terms or timing of the single currency. But there are others. Germans are finding it hard to love the euro. Kohl's passion for it is unrequited by two out of three voters. This opposition he blithely blames on "misunderstandings and misperceptions". Last week Douglas Hurd, the former foreign secretary, outlined a host of reasons why the terms and timing for EMU were impracticable and

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Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian

Land's end for Shell North Sea oil platform

SHELL announced yesterday that it would dismantle its Leman BK gas platform on land rather than dispose of the installation in the North Sea, writes Chris Barrie.

The plans — the first approved by the Government since the Brent Spar controversy — involve partially dismantling and shipping the 6,000-tonne steel platform ashore from its site 45 miles east of Lowestoft.

Shell said the Leman platform was simpler to decommission, smaller, and in shallower water than Brent Spar. It will put the £10 million contract out to tender shortly, with five UK firms front-runners to win the business. Greenpeace welcomed the decision to opt for onshore disposal.

Energy minister Tim Eggar said the Government would continue to review applications for decommissioning cases by case.

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW LEATHAM



Notebook

We're ready for a Ugandan solution



Edited by Mark Milner

LAST week the government in the Seychelles announced a novel way to boost inward investment. Anybody prepared to stash away \$10 million (£6.5 million) on the sun-kissed island in the Indian Ocean would be exempt from prosecution, no questions asked.

Predictably, this has led to uproar in the world business community, and rightly so. But it illustrates what most of the delegates at the World Economic Forum know only too well — that globalisation has spawned an orgy of corruption.

On one panel at Davos, a Brazilian judge and a Russian businessman swapped stories of assassination bids, while the joke among Swiss policemen is that criminals no longer rob banks, they own them. They point out that the slopes of St Moritz are now the playground of the Russian mafia rather than minor British royals.

Chairing a panel on corruption, Jules Kroll, chairman of the eponymous personal security firm, said it was all very well having consciousness raising sessions, but direct action was now needed.

He noted that the desire for greater co-operation across borders was growing, and that rules were widely different. This may be more difficult than he thinks, since it is not only small islands but banks in developed countries that are prepared to turn a blind eye to illegality in these times of cut-throat competition.

Nor is it easy in the current climate to see his solution to the massive Russian problem — do business but not with the mafia — anything more than wishful thinking.

But two things could be done. First, far more resources should be poured into policing in an attempt at a co-ordinated clean-up before it is too late. The American system, where a share of the proceeds from anti-drug smuggling operations go straight to the enforcement wing rather than into government coffers, should be more widespread. Second, the West should seize the offer from Uganda that debt forgiveness should be linked to a 20-year audit of the government books. In a world where incentive structures are everything, that would be the best possible reason to stay clean.

Fokker rescue link hits BAe

SHARES in British Aerospace fell sharply yesterday after it emerged as a possible rescuer for ailing Dutch plane maker Fokker.

BAe confirmed that it had held talks alongside its partners in the regional jet sales and marketing venture Aero International (Regional).

It is unclear, however, whether the AIR partners, which also include France's Aerospatiale and Italy's Alenia, are among the five front-runners with which Fokker says it is in serious talks about a rescue bid with its administrators.

News of a possible tie-up between BAe and Fokker, which had to seek protection from its creditors last month, was enough to send the British company's share price down 24p to 875p.

BAe was giving little away yesterday. A spokesman for

the group said: "We are monitoring the situation. There have been contacts. We need to know what is going on in the regional aircraft market."

Aerospatiale was equally non-committal. A spokesman said: "The partners in AIR have an interest in the Fokker situation. We are studying it but no decisions have been made yet."

A Fokker spokesman would confirm only that the South Korean company, Samsung, was one of the five "serious" contenders. He refused to comment on whether or not BAe or Aerospatiale were among the leading group.

However, Fokker is clearly keen to keep the company together as a single aircraft manufacturing entity rather than seeing itself broken up into what one executive described yesterday as "bits and pieces". That might prove difficult if BAe and Aerospatiale, which make rival products, were to become involved in a rescue operation.

Another possible suitor for Fokker is the Canadian company Bombardier, the owner of Belfast-based Short Brothers, where hundreds of jobs could be lost if Fokker were to fold.

Shorts has already issued

formal notices of possible job losses covering up to 1,500 people and yesterday Baroness Denton, from the Northern Ireland Office, held talks over the situation at Fokker with Dutch officials in the Hague.

Bombardier said yesterday it had agreed to hold talks with Fokker, but it did not make clear whether the negotiations were confined to Short's role as a supplier to the Dutch group or whether the Canadian group was interested in Fokker itself.

Fokker's future was thrown into the balance last month when its controlling shareholder, Daimler-Benz, refused to provide further financial support for the loss-making Dutch company.

That forced Fokker to apply to the courts for protection from its creditors and the Dutch government, which remains a shareholder, threw the company a £146 million lifeline through a combination of loans and advance payments on aircraft orders which are providing the company with the funds to keep production running for several weeks.

Fokker chairman Ben van Schaik said yesterday that he was more optimistic about

the future of the company than he had been a week ago. "One week ago we were not in talks and we didn't even have the bridge financing and that is an important hurdle," he said.

Daimler-Benz chairman Jurgen Schrempp said yesterday that Airbus Industrie, the big jet consortium, made up of Daimler-Benz Aerospace, BAe, Aerospatiale and Casa, needs a "common" identity and a "management with bottom-line responsibility". The current structure, he said, was one in which "managers have no role".

British Airways announced a 30 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the last three months of 1995 yesterday but failed to meet City expectations, partly because of adverse conditions in January, writes Ian King.

Despite an insistence by the chairman, Sir Colin Marshall, that prospects remained "favourable", analysts

marked down their full-year profit forecasts and the share price fell 19p to 502p. BA said passenger figures and January bookings made in January were disappointing due to adverse conditions in January, writes Ian King.

Despite an insistence by the chairman, Sir Colin Marshall, that prospects remained "favourable", analysts

also contributed to January's poor performance, with Japanese tourist traffic to Europe particularly badly hit.

Overall, the figures took nine-month profits to a record £594 million, up 84.5 per cent, while BA also broke records for passengers carried and percentage of seats sold.

Sir Colin said: "Business prospects remain encouraging — a record profit for the year is anticipated and we expect to continue our programme of performance improvements."

City analysts were less optimistic, however, warning that BA's costs had risen sharply in recent weeks.

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Workers of world warn business of backlash

LEADERS of the world's trade unions pledged yesterday to fight any attempts to drive down working standards and warned business of an imminent public backlash against the unemployment and inequality caused by globalisation.

Stressing the need to examine the social impact of economic liberalisation, unions made it clear that they rejected calls by Bundesbank president Hans Tietmeyer and Bank of France president Jean-Claude Trichet for greater labour market flexibility in Europe as one-sided.

"We anticipate a very difficult time if an attempt is made to reduce the living standards of employees," said Philip Jennings, general secretary of FIET, which represents 450 unions from 120 countries.

Mr Jennings was leading a group of union leaders to the World Economic Forum in Davos in order to lobby businessmen and politicians about the plight of the 750 million people around the world who were unemployed or underemployed.

"You can't leave the destinies of working people in the hands of a few unelected central bankers. I fear there will be a backlash if people are going to get lower wages and higher unemployment as part of this process."

Mr Jennings added that the reaction against "social Darwinism" could take the form of increased nationalism, xenophobia or greater protectionism.

The growing strength of accountable multinational companies had left a vacuum in governance, and it was

BAT covered up nicotine danger, says ex-employee

BAT industries, the tobacco and financial services conglomerate, has been accused by a former employee on prime-time US television of covering up the addictive nature of nicotine.

The allegation, heard by millions of viewers, is the latest assault on the credibility of the tobacco industry. It was made on the CBS programme 60 Minutes by Jeffrey Wigand, former research director at the BAT subsidiary Brown & Williamson.

Michael Moore, an attorney-general for Mississippi, told the programme that Mr Wigand was planning to testify in a lawsuit that the company knew for decades that tobacco was addictive. Mr Wigand is the most important tobacco official to have turned against the industry.

A BAT spokesman said the lawsuit was in its early stages. "We don't expect it to

marked down their full-year profit forecasts and the share price fell 19p to 502p. BA said passenger figures and January bookings made in January were disappointing due to adverse conditions in January, writes Ian King.

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Money Tips

A new book reveals valuable money tips based on the latest investment, tax and savings information. Here are a few tips covered in this *Complete Handbook of Money Tips*:

- A system used by unit trust experts for picking winning shares — during the last 25 years, you would have averaged over 28% return per annum.
- How to avoid Capital Gains and Inheritance Tax
- Fill in this form and reduce your income tax
- Bonds that favour OAPs
- Premium Bonds — can you improve the odds?
- How to maximise your pension
- Making the most of a building society account
- Watch out for this hidden cost of home banking
- When to buy an Annuity and why it could pay you to wait

Gold finger points to 'rogue'

OF SECRECY and are comparing notes, convinced the official figures for gold dealings do not add up.

One London broker said: "The whole thing remains shrouded in secrecy and is either a potential fireball or a damp squib."

Soubert Furzedo, a senior Brazilian central bank official, said: "The rumours are laughable. We are not preoccupied by the recent price movements."

Until now, the rumour that a Latin American central bank — finding itself short of gold to fill speculative positions — has been behind the price surge from some \$340 (225p) a Troy ounce before Christmas to

850 jobs go as Amstrad and Scottish Widows wield axe

MORE than 800 job losses were announced last night by insurer Scottish Widows and computer group Amstrad.

Scottish Widows said it hoped job losses could be achieved by retirement, routine departures and a voluntary redundancy scheme. The company also plans to close its processing offices in Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Leeds, London and Manchester with the compulsory loss of 100 jobs. The work will be transferred to Edinburgh.

MSF, the union for skilled office workers, said it was concerned that Scotland could lose a huge number of jobs in financial services. It will be seeking an urgent meeting with Michael Forsyth, the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Meanwhile, Amstrad is to cut 150 jobs in Britain and some staff at its European operations as part of a reorganisation of its unprofitable consumer electronics division.

Alan Sugar, chairman of the group, said: "The market trend in consumer electronics means only lean organisations who concentrate on their core skills will flourish. Where possible, UK staff will be offered suitable alternative employment within the group but substantial redundancies are inevitable."

Fokker fallout

AS FOKKER plays the sick man of Europe's aircraft industry, the question is whether, if British Aerospace is to play a role in the unfolding crisis, it should be that of the Dutch company's doctor or its heir. On the

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5414.5 last night have tended to be dismissed by market professionals.

But market talk has continued, and the announcement on Thursday that Brazil's state-owned company, Vale do Rio Doce, had discovered what would be the biggest gold mine in South America, may fuel gossip.

Normally this would be seen as simple good news, but the timing of the announcement will cause suspicion should Banco Central, the reserve bank, or state-owned Banco do Brasil, prove to be short of bullion. The discovery would have the welcome effect of holding down world prices and reassuring cred-

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TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 1.965	France 7.52	Italy 2.370	Singapore 2.12
Austria 15.30	Germany 2.20	Japan 154.41	South Africa 41
Belgium 43.20	Greece 370.00	Netherlands 2.4725	Spain 183.00
Canada 2.05	Hong Kong 11.05	New Zealand 2.23	Sweden 10.57
Ceylon 0.7075	India 52.81	Norway 8.05	Switzerland 1.89
Denmark 6.52	Ireland 0.8525	Portugal 228.75	Turkey 0.647
Finland 6.89	Israel 4.76	Saudi Arabia 5.69	USA 1.4625

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).



Consumers to enjoy biggest rate reductions ever seen in cellular phone industry • Savings of up to 30pc due in March

Cellnet price war to squash Orange

Nicholas Baxendale
Technology Editor

THE battle for the mobile phone market moved into a new phase yesterday when Cellnet, the market leader with more than 2.3 million customers, announced price cuts aimed at checking the success of Orange in the digital market.

Cellnet, 60 per cent owned by British Telecom, said it was planning the largest price reductions seen in the cellular industry — with savings of up to 30 per cent.

The new prices, due to come into effect at the beginning of March, bring Cellnet's charges in line with those of Vodafone, its main competitor, which is already in the process of introducing cheaper packages.

Both Cellnet and Vodafone are seeking to close the price gap with Orange, the all-digital operator which has signed up more than 400,000 customers since starting operations in April 1994.

Orange, due to be listed on the Stock Exchange in March with an expected valuation of £2.7 billion, has been winning more digital customers in its network area than its larger rivals mainly because it charges less for calls.

This success has been achieved even though it has not completed its network, it charges more for its handsets, and it operates the less popular PCN mobile standard.

Cellnet's digital services have just under 300,000 customers, while its older analogue services have over 2 million. Digital services are clearer, can be used in many overseas countries, and can-

not be intercepted by eavesdroppers. However, handsets tend to cost more and call charges are usually higher than analogue ones.

Cellnet, which is not changing basic monthly charges for its four services, is offering customers of three of the services a new option to buy a fixed amount of airtime for an extra monthly payment. Customers paying between £2.12 and £12.50 a month more, excluding VAT, will get airtime worth between £5.53 and £17.50 a month.

It is topping 5p a minute of call charges for its digital service for consumers, leaving rates at 30p a minute for peak calls and 10p for off-peak calls. Peak calls on its digital service for business or heavy users are coming down from 25p to 20p a minute, with the off-peak period being extended to include Saturdays.

It is also following the industry trend by introducing per-second charging for digital.

Howard Ford, Cellnet's managing director, said yesterday's announcement was "bad news for our competitors who assumed they could compete on price alone".

Industry sources said that Cellnet and Vodafone, who between them dominate the UK mobile phone industry, want to get more subscribers to switch from analogue to digital in order to free capacity on their allotted radio spectrum.

A Cellnet spokesman, who claimed the group still had adequate capacity, admitted that it could replace every analogue subscriber with four digital customers. He added that the group had lobbied the Government for extra spectrum to meet long-term needs.

BT forces OfTel to back down on redundancy cost

BRITISH Telecom has forced Don Cruickshank, the director general of OfTel, to back down from his attempt to prevent competitors having to contribute to the cost of the former state-owned monopoly's massive redundancy programme, writes Nicholas Baxendale.

Mr Cruickshank said last month BT's rivals should not have to pay part of BT's redundancy costs through

interconnection charges — the money which other operators pay BT for carrying their calls over its network.

He also felt that the cost of the BT chairman's office, vacant property, and publicity campaigns to win back customers should not be included in the calculation of interconnect charges.

But in his ruling yesterday, Mr Cruickshank said that he had only ruled out a

portion of the redundancy costs from the interconnection calculation. Also excluded were the cost of short-term investments.

A OfTel spokesman said that BT had provided a lot more information, and as a result two-thirds of its redundancy costs together with the expense of running the chairman's office had been allowed. He added that BT was entitled to fully allocate these costs under the terms of its licence.

Mercury, BT's main UK rival, said that it was shocked by Mr Cruickshank's decision. Peter Howell-Davies, Mercury's chief executive, said: "I'm appalled that OfTel should feel BT deserves special treatment as competition is a fact of life for most operators."

"Indeed, many have used redundancy to improve their efficiency and reduce costs in the face of that competition. Typically, the costs of such activity are borne by the company and its shareholders, not by customers and competitors."

He pointed out that BT had admitted in 1992 that its voluntary redundancy programme had been pitched higher than necessary to persuade more people to leave the company.

OfTel said that it had disallowed a third of BT's redundancy costs because they were over the figure which the group was contractually obliged to pay. It added that the exclusions, including publicity expenses, would reduce inland conveyance charges by almost 10 per cent.

Hanson pays a high price for past excesses

OUTLOOK/ Ian King on troubles facing the £10bn conglomerate's demerger

DRINKERS are only too familiar with the scenario. After a heavy session the night before, the morning after is accompanied by a hangover, which usually takes longer to shake off than the original binge did.

It is a sensation being suffered by the noble Lord Hanson. Not 48 hours after announcing that his £11 billion business empire was breaking up, sending the shares racing, City analysts were reaching for the aspirin.

They priced £1 billion from Hanson's market value, prompting an emergency teleconference for bond holders on Friday, along with week-end rumours that the group was planning a £800 million special dividend pay-out.

Although Hanson would only admit yesterday that a special dividend had been discussed, the fact that it is even being considered shows the tremendous problems associated with selling the idea of a demerger to shareholders.

Hanson has always been focused on dividends, and, in recent years especially, it has given the impression that it would rather do anything — even cut its cherished contribution to the Conservative Party — than cut the pay-out.

While not yet a tried-and-tested formula, special dividends have had their successes in the past. In recent months, several regional electricity companies, including Midlands and Northern, have used the tactic to ward off potential predators. Granada used the special dividend successfully, as part of its £3.9 billion assault on Forte, while other companies flush with cash have pondered the idea before settling on a share buy-back.

Hanson is considering a special dividend to appeal to one key group of shareholders in particular — the income funds, who have previously held the stock because of its relatively high yield, and who were said to be fuming at the way the demerger announcement was handled.

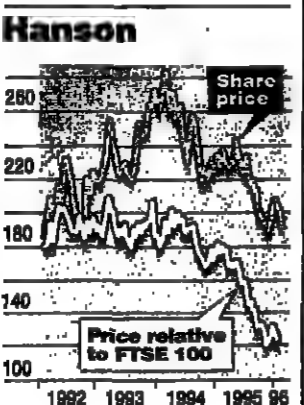
Some income funds were already considering bailing out, miffed at comments made by Lord Hanson last November, in which he ruled out increasing the dividend. In fact, several analysts said at the time that given Hanson's debt

levels, a dividend cut would have been more appropriate.

As one analyst said yesterday: "The shares would have been marked down if the dividend had been cut, but the company would have won respect for dealing with the issue directly. But Lord Hanson is a proud man, and wouldn't have wanted to let his small shareholders down."

Yet even a special dividend, which by definition is a one-off, is unlikely to be the spoonful of sugar that helps the medicine go down.

Lord Hanson has promised that the four demerged companies will pay dividends appropriate to their sector, but the four's combined dividends are unlikely to equal the present Hanson pay-out, and certainly not if the Chemicals company — which will



Dalgety profits a dog's dinner

DALGETY'S profits fell by more than a fifth to £47.4 million in the first half of the year as the pet food and agribusiness group struggled to integrate the Felix and Fido pet food brands bought a year ago from Quaker for £44 million.

Chief executive Richard Clothier said a key factor for the downturn was a drop in sales at Spillers, Dalgety's old UK pet food business.

Spillers has suffered from a shift in the UK pet food market, especially in dog food, which has seen a stronger-than-expected move towards "chunk" foods, which Quaker already produces, away from the paté-style products which Spillers makes.

This has been hastened by a rise in raw materials costs which particularly affected paté-style brands. Mr Clothier said that unusually high wheat prices — up 10 per cent in December — had cut margins, but the company was already pushing those cost rises through to the consumer.

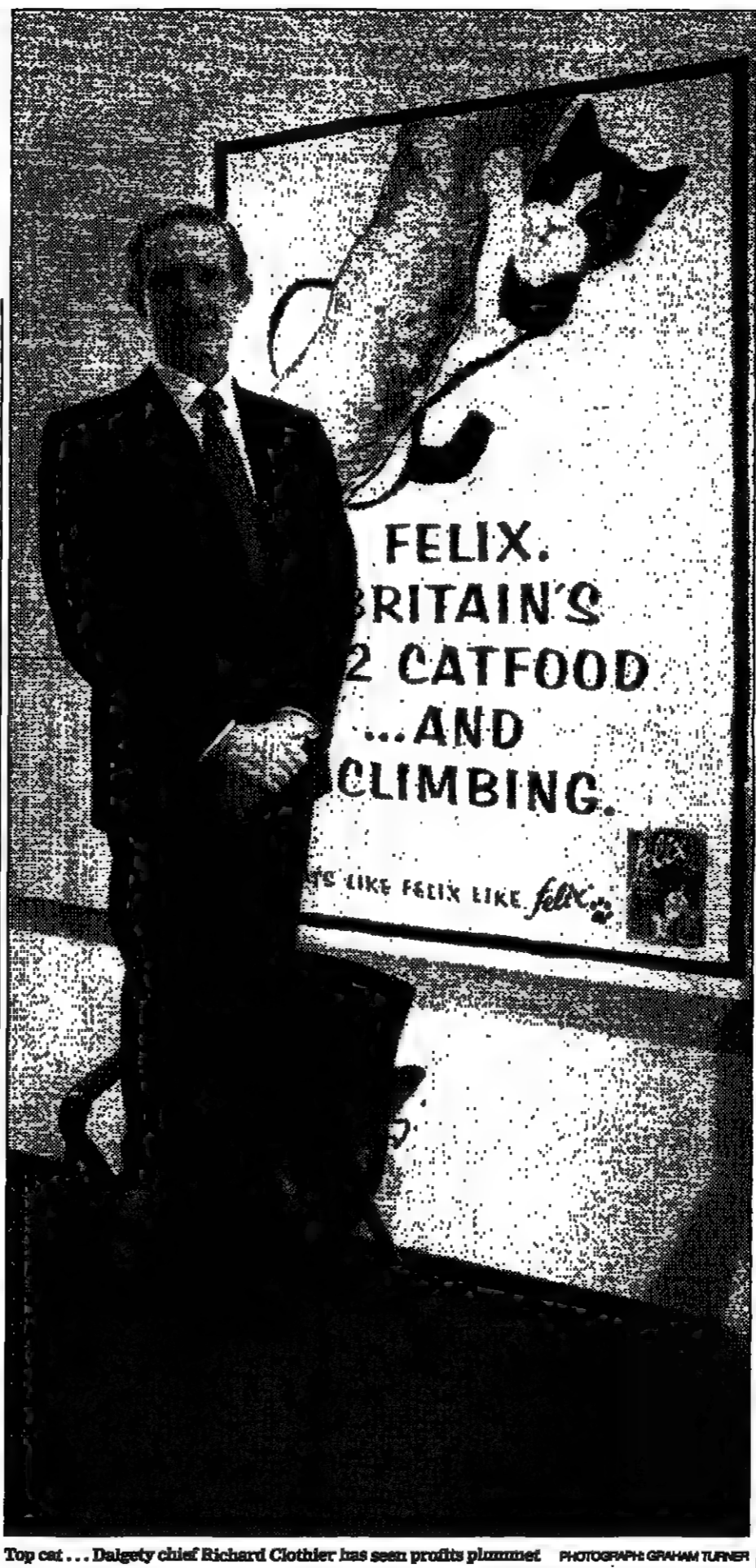
He predicted that Europeans, who mostly feed their pets with food they prepare themselves, will follow the lead of US and British pet owners who increasingly turn to prepared food in cans and bags.

The group made a charge of £30 million for reorganising its pet food business and £10 million for property revaluations, offset by a gain of £82 million from the sale of its consumer foods unit.

In the City, analysts cut their forecasts for full-year profits from about £132 million to about £125 million.

Having sold its consumer foods business, Dalgety is now focused on three businesses: pet food, food ingredients and animal feed and pig breeding.

In September it sold its Homepride snack business to Campbell Soup for £58.6 million, and a month later sold its Golden Wonder snacks division for £54.6 million.



Top cat... Dalgety chief Richard Clothier has seen profits plummet. PHOTOGRAPH BY GAWAN TURNER

News in brief

- Clinton submits slimline budget**
PRESIDENT Clinton yesterday sent a highly abbreviated budget to Congress projecting 2.2 per cent real gross domestic product growth in 1997 and 2.3 per cent in 1998. Instead of the usual 2,000 pages, yesterday's document was a skimpy 20 pages because of the budget deadline.
The bare-bones budget was almost identical to the offer Mr Clinton put on the table in January. The \$1.64 trillion budget projects the 1997 deficit reaching \$160.6 billion, up slightly from this year's estimated \$154.4 billion. A fuller budget plan will be presented next month. — Mark Tran in New York
- Bank notes slight rise in cash**
THE QUANTITY of cash in circulation grew only slowly last month, damping hopes of an imminent retail recovery which had been fuelled by recent signs that consumer confidence was improving. The Bank of England said yesterday that growth of notes and coin in circulation fell back to 0.3 per cent in January, from 0.5 per cent the previous month. The data, used as a guide to consumer activity, showed the seasonally adjusted annual rate dropping to 5.7 per cent from December's 6.9 per cent.
Combined with separate government data also published yesterday, showing housing starts fell in 1995 by 18 per cent to 169,700 against 199,000 in 1994, the money supply figures dented hopes of imminent economic improvement. — Sarah Ryle
- Kinnock sticks by Iberia**
EUROPEAN transport commissioner Neil Kinnock yesterday defended his decision to approve a £400 million state handout to Spanish airline Iberia, saying the move was legally sound. Transport Secretary, Sir George Young, has condemned the decision as countering efforts to establish fair competition in the skies.
Mr Kinnock said he hoped Iberia's would be the last big subsidy to a state owned airline. — Keith Harper
- United cuts bills for elderly**
UNITED Utilities, the company formed from the merger of the North-west's regional electricity company Norweb and North West Water, is reducing bills by £10 each for 100,000 pensioners who heat their homes with off-peak electricity.
The heating bills reduction, announced yesterday, follows a £3.60 "efficiency rebate" to be paid annually for five years by North West Water. — Maryn Halseil
- Germans buy Grace's dialysis**
WR Grace, the American conglomerate, yesterday announced it is selling its kidney dialysis business to Germany's Fresenius in a deal worth \$3.2 billion. If the purchase is completed, Fresenius is likely to have sales of \$3.5 billion in 1996 and will be one of the world's largest dialysis companies. — Mark Tran in New York
- Sears sells shoe stores**
SHEFFIELD businessman Stephen Hinchliffe yesterday announced his retail group Facia is buying 134 Saxe and Curries shoe shops from Sears.
Sears said the latest restructuring of British Shoe Corporation, which controls its retail chains, would involve 90 redundancies from the Leicester headquarters followed by a maximum 200 further redundancies from the group's distribution business over the next 12 months. — Tony May
- Farnell seeks bid backing**
HOWARD Poulson, chief executive of Yorkshire-based electronic components company Farnell, has embarked on an intensive round of meetings with the company's institutional investors to try to persuade them to back its proposed £1.85 billion takeover of US rival Premier Electronics.
The bid is considered audacious by the City because Farnell is much smaller than Premier. Some of Farnell's institutional shareholders have expressed fears that the deal would dilute earnings for many years. — Pauline Springett

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Poppley to tackle...
 English Open...
 Racing...
 New Tot...
 favour W...

مكتبة ابن الجوزي

Rugby Union

Popplewell clear to tackle Quins

Robert Armstrong
TWICKENHAM surprised Harlequins yesterday by giving the Irish international prop Nick Popplewell the go-ahead to play against them for Newcastle Geoforth in Saturday's rearranged fifth-round Pilkington Cup game.

for Newcastle, because he has been living in Dublin this season. The RFU, however, says its own 120-day qualification period which he has now served, having registered for Newcastle last October.

Weir who plans to live on Tyneside. Hallett believes EU employment law would prevent any European union from imposing the 120-day quarantine on a professional player switching clubs between unions.

Minister urged to refine Bosman law with European counterparts

ABOUR's Tom Pendry will urge the Minister of Sport Laine Saxton today to call a conference of European Union sports ministers to establish a common line on the Bosman ruling, writes John Duncan.

Labour MEP for Midlands West, is organising cross-party support in the European Parliament for a compromise interpretation of the Bosman ruling.

Scrutiny made an impressive comeback to the women's tour. Her first, in Philadelphia in November 1994, lasted only one match.



Ready to return... once-troubled Jennifer Capriati 'is happier and much wiser now'

Capriati launches second comeback attempt in Paris

PARIS, where as a 14-year-old in 1990 she became the youngest player to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam event, is the setting for Jennifer Capriati's second attempted comeback to the women's tour.

19-year-old American had not played competitively for 14 months, "she says she is now ready physically and mentally after a long preparation in Florida."

Man Open and again disappeared from view. At the US Open last September stories of Capriati being "in no fit state to play tennis" were denied by her agent, Barbara Perry of IMG, who said she was both fit and happy.

Athletics
Christie ruled out until the great outdoors

STEPHEN BIRLEY
BRITAIN'S Olympic sprinter David Christie finds his indoor season written off virtually before it began. Christie, a late entrant at the national indoor championships in Birmingham last weekend, juddered to an untimely stop in the 60 metres final on Saturday afternoon.

leaved Christie, despite protracted denials, would defend his title in Atlanta. Three athletes who will definitely be in Atlanta, assuming they are fit, are Peter Whitehead, Richard Nerurkar and Liz McColgan, who were named yesterday for the Olympic marathons.

Lister gives Parsons backing to high jump on to the board

JOHN LISTER, who is not to seek re-election as the British Athletic Federation's treasurer yesterday threw his weight behind the international high jumper Geoff Parsons as his successor.

There is a professional financial department in the federation, so it's not a position that the old-fashioned honorary treasurer would be regarded as necessarily filling. It's more a strategic position, and in one fell swoop that vital link between the athletes and the federation could be made.

Table Tennis

English Open launches world pro tour

RICHARD JAGO
THIS year's English Open will be the inaugural event of the world's first professional tour, organised by the International Table Tennis Federation and with \$250,000 (£185,000) prize-money for the finals at the end of this year.

It could also become the outstanding open tournament in the world. Its own prize-money of about \$20,000 will be a record for the event, and although this will provide relatively modest rewards compared with the incomes of some leading players, the desire to qualify for the lucrative finals should bring them to Kettering.

The International Management Group about the promotion of the tour, although it is likely that any sponsorship deal will, for now, cover only the finals.

Salter given 21-day ban after drugs charge

DARREN SALTER, a conditiojn jockey attached to Red Millman's Colleton stable, was yesterday banned 21 days (starting Thursday) after failing a drug test.

Lingfield All-weather Flat card with form

Table with racing results and form for Lingfield All-weather Flat card. Includes race numbers, names, and odds.

64 cards lost

RACING has again been hit by the icy weather, with today's meetings at Carlisle and Warwick, like Newton Abbot yesterday, abandoned because of frost.

Results

Table with racing results for various tracks including Southwell, Doncaster, and Carlisle.

Racing

New Tote conditions favour Warm Spell

KEEN OLIVER
GARY MOORE is hoping for a warm spell in more ways than one at Newbury on Saturday. The Epsom trainer's "Warm Spell" is in good form for the Tote Gold Trophy, I just hope the weather relents.

Tony McCoy was impressed with him at Kempton and said he would ride him again, said Moore. "I would give Fiddwell plenty of respect and they say Frickley has improved since but he would need to. I definitely wouldn't swap Warm Spell for any of them."

inquiry that Livio had been dropped 4lb in error between the two races, the Catterick win came as no surprise. At Livio's first afternoon, Tragic Hero (4.20), with the very capable Jim Durkin in the saddle, looks worthy of the nap in the concluding Peach Handicap for amateur riders.

Results

Table with racing results for Southwell.

Southwell

Table with racing results for Southwell.

Doncaster

Table with racing results for Doncaster.

Carlisle

Table with racing results for Carlisle.

Warwick

Table with racing results for Warwick.

Newton Abbot

Table with racing results for Newton Abbot.

Motor Racing

High-speed return by Hakkinen

Alan Henry

MILKA HAKKINEN picked up the threads of his career yesterday with an impressive first outing at the wheel of a Formula One car since he sustained severe head injuries in a high-speed crash during qualifying for last year's Australian Grand Prix.

The 27-year-old Finn was driving last year's McLaren-Mercedes in a test which the team had planned to keep as private as possible, but he posted a fastest time within a second of the world champion Michael Schumacher's best in the Ferrari at the Paul Ricard circuit in southern France over the weekend.

"Milka's testing himself rather than the car," said a McLaren spokesman. "He has been training hard and we wanted him to have his first run since the accident without any pressure."

A week of pre-season car launches was dominated by the unveiling of Benetton's new Renault-engined B196. In contrast to Hakkinen's low-key return, Benetton's launch in the Sicilian resort of Taormina was conducted in the best tradition of F1 high glitz.

After a spectacular start with Jean Alesi and Gerard Berger driving two of last year's Benetton-Renaults through the main Corso Umberto, there was an official presentation of last year's Constructors' Championship trophy to Benetton by Max Mosley, president of the governing body Fia.

The action then switched to the 2,000-year-old Teatro Antico, where Alesi, French by nationality but Sicilian by birth, unveiled the new Benetton B196 in the company of celebrities including the French film star Gerard Depardieu and Italian actress Mara Venner.

Alesi and Berger both know, however, that they face a huge challenge in filling the void at Benetton left by Schumacher's defection to Ferrari.

The team's technical director Ross Brawn describes the new car as "evolutionary but with significantly improved aerodynamics" and holds out considerable optimism that the team will sustain their winning ways.

The proof of the pudding, of course, will come during the next few weeks of testing at Estoril before the first race of the season, the Australian Grand Prix at Melbourne's new Albert Park circuit on March 10.

Hakkinen meanwhile will be moving on to Estoril for Sunday's launch of the all-new McLaren-Mercedes MP4/11, on which David Coulthard's hopes for 1996 will also be pinned.

The Scot, who left Williams at the end of last season, will have to wait only until the following day to see what his old team have come up with. The new Williams FW18 for Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve is due to be unveiled in the same pit lane next Monday.

British expertise extends beyond F1, however. Reynolds, the Bicester-based British-owned firm, builds IndyCars — the off-the-peg model costs \$480,000 (\$220,000) — and last season seized pole position in that branch of motor sport by providing the car that Jacques Villeneuve drove to the IndyCar title.

Reynolds had export turnover of £18 million last year. Its IndyCar rivals Lola and Penske are also based here. The British-owned Lola, located in John Major's Huntingdon constituency, has been building Indycars for three decades. The firm has landed the contract to supply chassis for the new one-make Formula 3000 single-seater class in 1996 — £28,000 per chassis, demand expected to exceed 20 units — and makes 85 per cent of its sales abroad.

The US-owned Penske company concluded long ago that Britain was technically and economically the best place to build its cars. Its factory at Poole, Dorset opened more than 20 years ago.

IndyCar and F1 engines are supplied mainly by two rival Northampton-based companies, Cosworth and Ilmor Engineering. The former builds grand prix engines for Ford to power the Subaru team in 1996 and Jackie Stewart's Milton Keynes-based team when it starts up in 1997; the latter builds them for Mercedes-Benz to power the McLaren.

Ilmor and Cosworth also provide IndyCar "customer engines" of the shelf for around £1 million per year for each two-car team. Exports by both companies are valued at around £25-£30 million a year.

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Formula One glitz... the Sicilian resort of Taormina is the setting as Benetton unveil the new Renault-engined B196

Boxing

Bruno and Benn in pills probe

Jack Massarik

YES popped at the British Boxing Board of Control's offices in London yesterday when officials read press reports from Tenerife that Frank Bruno and Nigel Benn were taking 150 vitamin pills a day.

Last night inquiries were being made in the Canaries, where Britain's two WBC champions are training at a warm-weather camp for their world-title defences next month. Bruno against Mike Tyson, Benn against Sugar Ray Maltinga.

Ingestion of vitamins on this scale, as Professor Thomas Sanders, head of nutrition and diet at King's College, London, pointed out yesterday, "could cause problems".

"I've spoken to Frank Warren, the promoter of Bruno and Benn, and had a chat with Frank Bruno's wife Laura, and we just want to know the details," he said last night.

"If you read a story that says Britain's top boxers could be putting themselves at risk, we obviously want to know how and why."

The Board's chief medical officer Adrian Whitehead said: "If they've got a balanced diet — and there's no reason to believe they haven't — their nutrition is better than most people's. I don't believe any vitamins they take would have any benefit to them other than a psychological one."

The Board was "not wielding a big stick", stressed Morris. "We are not going to hassle our boxers — we are very proud of them — these are our two WBC world champions — but we want chapter and verse medically about what they are doing and how they are doing it."

"We want to be sure they are not doing anything that puts themselves at risk. Our own medical panel have initiated the inquiries. We obviously need to know. Some of this may be exaggerated, but once we find out the levels of vitamins that are being taken we can get experts to assess whether they are safe."

Rugby League

Weather threat to Cumbria ties

John Huxley

TWO outstanding Silk Cumbria Cup fourth-round ties are continuing to give the Rugby Football League a problem. Both are to be played in Cumbria, where severe weather is putting them at risk.

The Workington v Widnes match, which should have been played today, was further postponed for 24 hours after a heavy snowfall. And there will be a pitch inspection at the Recreation Grounds this morning to see if tonight's Whitehaven v Halifax tie can go ahead.

Whitehaven's chairman Derrick Mossop said: "Unless there is a dramatic change overnight I cannot see the match being played. Roads into the town are blocked and we haven't been able to reach the stadium to see what conditions are like."

Yesterday the RFL was considering its options. The most likely outcome seems to be that in the event of further postponements the clubs will be given until Sunday to complete the ties, after which the League will consider taking the games to grounds that have under-soil heating.

Bill Madine, secretary of Whitehaven, said yesterday: "We would be very reluctant to give up home advantage."

chairman Peter Higham has criticised Leeds and Wigan for forging links with rugby union clubs. The Cheshire club have barred the players from pursuing such connections and have made it clear they will not allow union clubs to use their Wilderspool stadium.

Higham said: "We've just finished the 100-year war and now we are bending over backwards to help rugby union. We should be concentrating on promoting Super League and not throwing down the welcome mat to union. I can't see the gain for league in Wigan entering the Midland Sevens or playing Bath in challenge matches."

"Some league people won't be resting easy, the way we've gone cap in hand to union. There is a real danger of union gaining the upper hand at league grounds they share, because of the money in their hands."

The chairman said Warrington had rejected invitations from Welsh rugby union clubs to play them at league.

St Helens' 68-16 Challenge Cup fourth-round win at Warrington has cost them dear. Their losses forward Dean Busby has been ruled out for a month with a torn medial ligament in his knee. However, he should be available for the semi-finals if the Merseyside club progress that far.

Why British engineering is the pits' pick

Alan Henry on a remarkable success story of high technology in the sterling area

BESIDES costing millions and causing their creators almost as many sleepless nights, the 1996 Benetton, McLaren and Williams cars now being unveiled have one quite remarkable thing in common: they are all products of British precision engineering, from drawing board to workshop floor.

Likewise, Michael Schumacher's allegiance may have transferred from Benetton to Ferrari but the world champion will continue to rely on British engineering design as he attempts a hat-trick of Formula One titles.

Benetton and Ferrari are Italian-owned and controlled, but both teams have moved their design and research headquarters to south-eastern England to take full advantage of Britain's unique motor-racing infrastructure.

It may surprise people who have seen the nation's volume car manufacturers picked off by foreign competitors, but when it comes to racing cars the world still likes to buy British. So much so that Luca di Montezemolo, the president of Ferrari, refers to the corridor around south-west London and Surrey as the "Silicon Valley of international motor racing".

Six of the 11 teams entered for next year's F1 world championship are based here — seven if one counts Ferrari, who built their base at company headquarters in Maranello. So are all three world

The Zoom Zone



Table with 2 columns: Key, Place, Company. Lists various racing teams and their locations in London.

Ice Hockey

Rinks of gold for the lawyers

Wie Hatcher

ANYONE encouraged by the game's growth must also be concerned at its growing pains. The all-time attendance record was beaten by the 12,586-strong crowd at the Nynex Arena for Manchester Storm's 4-2 win over Bracknell on Sunday. But incidents elsewhere promise to maintain the sport as a lucrative field for members of the legal profession.

"I've a desk full of legal matters. Every day seems to revolve around a call to our solicitor now," the British Ice Hockey Association secretary David Pickles said yesterday. "Five years ago I didn't even know who he was; we just used to get a calendar at Christmas. Now he is highly

involved in running the sport."

One of the latest items on that desk is the dispute between Telford Tigers and the arena management at Blackburn before Sunday night's Division One match. Telford's Russ Plant was refused entry and prevented from playing in a game the visitors lost 9-7.

Plant, a product of Telford's youth development programme, had moved to Blackburn last season but returned to the Shropshire club last week. With the sides unable to agree a fee, the BIHA was asked to arbitrate but Telford were given permission to use him pending the outcome. Now Telford are demanding to be awarded the points or have the game replayed at no cost to themselves.

The next case pending concerns the London-born Canadian-raised Roger Hunt, who while playing for Murreyfield Racers at Bracknell on February 22 1992 was involved in an incident in which a home player was seriously injured.

Hunt was detained by Thames Valley Police and charged with causing grievous bodily harm, but he left the country after the court hearing was twice postponed.

The BIHA's disciplinary chairman Frank Dempster was quoted at the time as saying that Hunt and the then Racers coach Leo Koopmans had been placed "under a lifetime ban from participating in British ice hockey". Yet on Saturday Hunt returned in Murreyfield Royals' 15-2 home defeat by Swindon Wildcats, with Dempster denying any knowledge of a "lifetime ban".

He claimed it was only a "period of indefinite suspension" and added that after receiving a request from Murreyfield for the situation to be reviewed he had given permission for Hunt to return after "consulting three members of the BIHA council".

Dempster also said he had been assured by the club that the player had not been charged. But a Thames Valley police spokesman said yesterday: "We did investigate proceedings at the time and the case is still not closed."

Fife Flyers' use of their newly signed Canadian Frank Evans in the defeats at home to Sheffield (4-3) and away at the Durham Wasps (9-6) is also "under review". The BIHA had ordered Fife not to play him pending receipt of his international clearance.

Basketball

Byrd continues to prey on the league that rejected his Palace

Robert Pryce

ALTON BYRD, the urbane host of a Radio 5 show, Crystal Palace's general manager and part owner, takes up his other role tonight: the bespoken avenger.

Palace, the team the Budweiser League rejected last year, have already ejected two Bud League teams from the National Cup. For the first leg of the semi-final at the National Sports Centre tonight the league will be represented by its champions, the Sheffield Sharks.

Palace will apply to the Bud League again this year, but Byrd will leave the presentation of their case to his fellow directors. "I couldn't take another year," he said, "of satisfying a set of criteria that are seemingly unsatisfiable."

The reservations raised by the Bud League last summer have largely been laid to rest. Palace have attracted commercial and local authority interest, sponsorship and healthy enough crowds; for their 80-75 win over the Leopards in the quarter-finals the attendance was just under 2,000.

Palace will apply to the Bud League again this year, but Byrd will leave the presentation of their case to his fellow directors. "I couldn't take another year," he said, "of satisfying a set of criteria that are seemingly unsatisfiable."

Snooker

Some shaker from Morgan

Clive Everton

DARREN MORGAN edged past Peter Ebdon 6-5 with a respoited black yesterday to record his first victory in four visits to the Benson and Hedges Masters at the Wembley Conference Centre.

His victory war-dance, accompanied by a handshake that almost yanked his opponent's arm out of its socket, was even more extravagant than Ebdon's last year when he beat Stephen Hendry from two down with three to play.

"I've always had a go at him [Ebdon] in the past for doing that, but I just couldn't help it," said Morgan. "It was very unprofessional and very immature," said Ebdon.

Morgan, the only member of the world's top eight never to have won a major title, was taken to the sudden-death extra black when the 11th frame ended in a tie.

Trailing 2-4, he had fought back to 5-4 before a break of 96 (12 reds, 12 blacks) brought Ebdon level at 5-5. In the deciding frame Morgan missed a match-ball but he would ordinarily pot and had to watch Ebdon clear the three remaining balls to tie.

Hockey

Tough tie for Loughtonians

Pat Rowley

THE strength of the teams left in the EA Cup was bound to produce a tight draw, and two quarter-finals that would have made excellent fixtures — Guildford v Reading and Old Loughtonians v Southgate — have come out of the hat.

Loughtonians, who defend their indoor title at Crystal Palace on Friday, have their fourth successive home draw in the outdoor competition, but Southgate are the most successful cup side. Currently leaders of the National League, they ended Loughtonians' unbeaten record in November with a 2-1 win.

Unlike Loughtonians, East Grinstead's run of home ties has been broken. They are away to Havant, the 1990 winners.

The other quarter-final sees the league champions Teddington at home to Canterbury, who are in the first eight for the first time. Of the survivors, these are the only sides never to have won a national competition.

The teams in all four quarter-finals have already met in the league this winter, all at the reverse venues. Guildford drew 2-2 at Reading, East Grinstead beat Havant 4-1 and Canterbury gained their first win over Teddington, 2-0.

in the Jack

SFA delays sign of cross punishment

Football Forecast

Christie abandons the indoor season, page 13
Popplewell cleared to face Quins, page 13

McCarthy steps into Big Jack's shoes, page 14
Formula One parades the new cars, page 15

SportsGuardian

WORLD CUP CLOSE TO CHAOS AS ORGANISERS REFUSE TO BYPASS COLOMBO

David Hopps on fresh pressure on Sri Lanka to allow matches to be moved from the capital and the shadow of the bomber

Now West Indies want out

WEST INDIES joined forces with Australia last night in imploring the World Cup organisers to reschedule their group matches outside Sri Lanka in the wake of last week's terrorist bomb blast in Colombo.

Although West Indies did not quite follow Australia's lead by expressly refusing to play in Sri Lanka, the tone of their statement implied that refusal was inevitable if a switch was not granted.

Pilcom, the joint hosts' organising committee, had steadfastly dismissed Australia's request, its secretary Jagmohan Dalmyia insisting: "Pilcom has decided that the matches in Sri Lanka will be played as scheduled."

Australia's captain Mark Taylor, who spoke in Sydney yesterday of "a genuine concern of life-threatening injury", played down the risk of disqualification. Indeed that is highly improbable, Pilcom's response suggesting only mounting confusion.

"There is nothing in the playing conditions about this," Dalmyia said. "It is totally unprecedented."

The organisers will have awoken today to the further jolt of the West Indian announcement, but with less than a week before Sydney's opening ceremony in Calcutta it would require formidable diplomatic efforts to persuade them to change their stance.

Whatever the merits of the argument, the willingness of cricket's authorities to invest decisions of such magnitude in a 12-strong organising committee, comprising representatives from Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, rather than invest the ICC itself with overall powers has again been exposed as folly.

Peter Short, president of the West Indies Board of Control, released a statement saying: "We are greatly appreciative of the security measures being taken by the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka, with the backing of the country's president and security forces, to try to ensure the safety of the West Indies team."

"However... the board has reluctantly come to the conclusion that for the players' safety and peace of mind, which is paramount, it has requested Pilcom to reschedule the Sri Lanka v West Indies match on February 25 outside Sri Lanka."



Bowler takes guard... the England seamer Darren Gough skips rope at practice in Lahore yesterday as Pakistan security forces look on

"The board is aware of the tremendous dislocation that this decision will cause and consequent disappointment to the Sri Lankan people. However, this decision has been taken in the best interests of West Indies and world cricket."

Though Leicestershire called off their pre-season tour to Sri Lanka yesterday after Foreign Office advice, Zimbabwe and Kenya have both indicated a qualified

willingness to play there, although they may reconsider after this West Indian plea.

Kenya's match is scheduled for the hill-country town of Kandy, and Jimmy Rayana, secretary of Kenya's national association, stated: "We shall play in Sri Lanka provided there is reasonable security. Kenya are playing outside Colombo where there has been no immediate threat yet."

Any prospect of Sri Lanka winning four of their five

group matches by virtue of forfeits, leaving them with only one outstanding group match, against India in Delhi, before their automatic qualification for the quarter-finals, would be an untenable position which even Pilcom could not easily ignore.

But the organisers could not agree to jettison Sri Lanka's matches without considerable repercussions, foremost of which would be Sri Lanka's likely withdrawal

from the World Cup and an immediate schism among the Test nations.

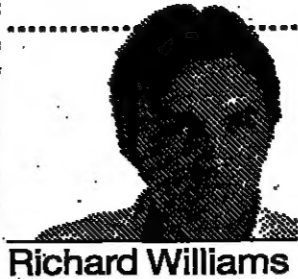
Pakistan's representatives are only too well aware that fixtures in the strife-torn cities of Karachi and Peshawar — each hosting England matches — will take place amid the same heavy security being offered by the Sri Lankans.

Meanwhile, a solution looked in sight yesterday, to the long-running dispute between India's state-run net-

work Doordarshan and WorldTel, the American company which bought the World Cup television rights.

According to reports from the High Court in New Delhi, Doordarshan has accepted a WorldTel offer under which World Cup matches played in India can be broadcast to local audiences, even though Doordarshan has not paid further funds into court as WorldTel had been demanding.

Asprilla? No certain cure for headache



Richard Williams

I CAN'T say for sure whether the supporters of Newcastle United had a close shave over the non-transfer of Faustino Asprilla, as the tabloids — with their tales of coke barons and porn queens — seem to have been suggesting. What I do know is that I feel sorry for them, which is not the most usual reaction to a team nine points clear in the Premiership.

Their fans have a coveted manager on a 10-year contract, an enthusiastic and constructive chairman, a majestically rebuilt stadium and a star-studded squad of players producing the sort of football that reminds cynics of why they first fell in love with the game. Set all that against the apparent failure to secure the signature of a forward who couldn't manage a goal in a crucial World Cup match against the United States 18 months ago, and you might ask exactly what there is to feel sorry for.

But the Asprilla affair will have reinforced a lesson Newcastle's supporters may have been in danger of forgetting: that life is not composed solely of a knifeline Beardsley pass, a mazy Givola dribble and a thunderous roar as Ferdinand rises at the far post.

The whole business of the knee X-ray and the disagreement over the player's value may be a game of bluff and counterbluff at the end of which Kevin Keegan will be writing Asprilla's name on a Newcastle team-sheet. Somehow I doubt it. If you watched the TV news footage of the Colombian's brief visit to St James' Park the other day and paid attention to the body language, you could have come to only one conclusion: that however much money he was being offered, Asprilla just didn't fancy the idea.

with a plane to catch. He accepted the pats, but did not smile. He handed the scraps of paper, but did not look the supplicants in the eye. Had I been a Geordie, I would not have renewed my season ticket in the expectation of seeing him in the black and white.

Every football fan has a similar tale buried somewhere in his or her secret heart, the memory of the transfer that went wrong — the one that didn't go through, or that left you spending the next 10 years wishing it had.

A few feet from me in this office are the Spurs supporter who remembers the arrival of the Fulham centre-back John Lacey as a signal of the club's diminished ambition, the Luton follower who wishes the acquisition of Steve Williams from Arsenal represented a symbol of deluded dreams, the Arsenal fan who uttered the name of Peter Marinello with a sad shake of the head, and the Evertonian to whom the arrival of Gary Lineker at the stadium of Andy Gray signified the moment at which the coherence of a title-winning team began to disintegrate.

Those of us destined to follow the fortunes of Nottingham Forest still think about how the arrival of Jim Baxter, the former Scottish genius bought by the chairman without the manager's knowledge, helped destroy a lovely side almost 30 years ago.

Baxter scored with a stunning long-range volley in his first home game and then took his team mates on a tour of the city's bars lasting several months. ("Bad team," Baxter said of Forest recently. They were indeed, after he had got among them.)

A COUPLE of years later Brian Clough announced the signing to Derby County — the hated rivals — of Forest's sole remaining jewel, the winger Ian Storey-Moore, and paraded him in front of County's crowd during the half-time interval at the Baseball Ground. Realising what they had allowed, the Forest committee withdrew from the deal and sold him to Manchester United instead.

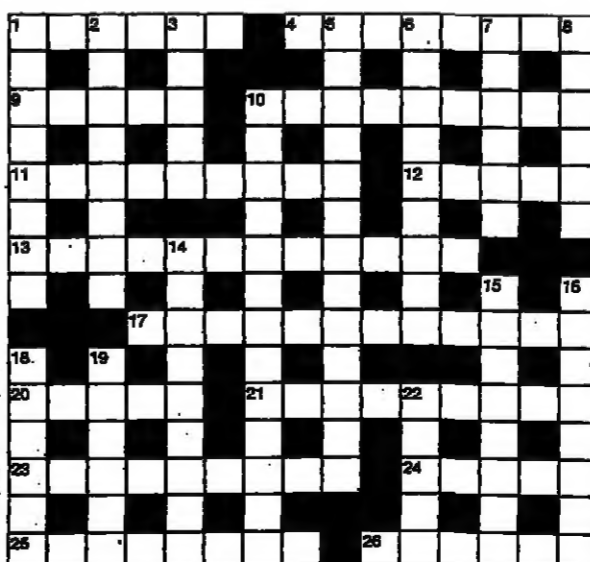
When Clough walked into the City Ground a few years later and began the adventure that ended with Forest's name alongside those of Real Madrid and AC Milan on the European Cup, one or two of us had to swallow hard to forget his part in that humiliation. The short, unhappy saga of Faustino Asprilla is unlikely to leave such a scar, but it is a reminder to Newcastle that, as Ron Greenwood once informed Glenn Hoddle, disinvestment is part of football.

Guardian top of the naps table

CHRIS HAWKINS napped Tempering (7-1) at Southwell yesterday, sending the Guardian to the top of the Sporting Life naps table with a profit of £25.70. *Racing, page 13*

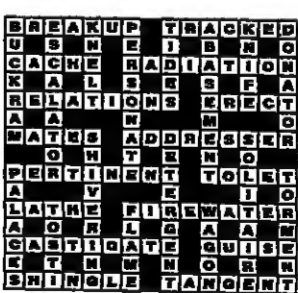
Guardian Crossword No 20,568

Set by Gordius



- Across**
- Screw turning red to green (6)
 - Forgetting nothing while on errand (6)
 - Member taken round among the lost (5)
 - Mischance may be applied mathematically (9)
 - Firm ran mean business in Ireland (5)
 - Having caught rinky fish, do even better (5)
 - Leo's Bavarian version is equally bold (5,2,1,4)
 - Composed a sonnet to brag about fast food (5,2,5)
 - Die for a drink (5)
 - Media prominence for punishment awarded by master... (6)
 - ... about whom we infer Cavalier treatment (6)
 - Saw to prior inspection (6)
 - The fringe are well advised not to be straightforward (6)

- Down**
- They should be prepared to raise current using copper to British standard (4,4)
 - People who flourish in a manor — or in a caravan? (8)
 - Lavish from Egypt to Israel opening new relationships (6)
 - Mad Charlie who upsets the forces of law and order... (7,5)
 - ... like a cop — gets a bashing for others' (9)
 - ... stupidity — putting one officer into unprofessional work (6)
 - Child turns up for a drink — it's refused (2,4)
 - Running buffer? (5,2,6)
 - Kohl gets a bit of a laugh in opening house endlessly (3,6)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,567

- Principal supporter this month with article in another month (6)
- Instrument for the ear with too refined a range (9)
- Capital lacks one in the south-east; they're thin on the ground (6)
- Presumably said without glory (6)
- Fruit French paper is short of (5)

Solution tomorrow

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If the best measure of a country's cuisine is the standard of the lunch to be found, at random, in a small town in a moderately priced restaurant, then France some time ago slipped into second place in Europe. Not only is Italy ahead but Spain and England are on the way up.

Sebastian Faulks

G2 page 8

End of peer
New Labour Es



Inside

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ